

A
DISCOURSE
O F
Things
A B O V E
REASON.

INQUIRING

Whether a Philosopher should admit there are any such.

By a Fellow of the Royal Society.

To which are annexed by the Publisher
(for the Affinity of the Subjects)

Some

A D V I C E S

About judging of Things said to
Transcend REASON.

W R I T T E N

By a Fellow of the same Society.

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*By the
Hon^{ble}
Boys*

DISCOURSE OF Things REASON

IN ORDER
To show a Right Reason
that there are any

By a Fellow of the Royal Society

To which are added by the Publisher
(for the Advantage of the Student)

Some

ADVICES

About Judging of Things
Title and REASON

WRITTEN

By a Fellow of the Royal Society

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Ja. Thun. June 18 1912 10/

An Advertisement.

THe Later of the two following Dialogues is but a part of a Discourse, consisting of some Conferences, whereof, that was neither the First, nor the Last. This 'twas thought fit the Reader should have notice of, that he may the more easily guess upon what account it is, that some Clauses in the first Page, (and perhaps a few other Passages elsewhere) contain somewhat that appears not altogether the same it would have done, if there had been no need to make any alteration at all in that Page. But because, tho there was a connection between that Dialogue and the rest of the Papers from which 'tis dismembered, yet it's dependency upon the others, is not so very great, but that the Publisher thought the divulging of it might be useful and seasonable: and therefore finding that want of Leisure,

and much Diffidence, made the Author unwilling to revise, and part with the other Papers that accompanied this which now comes forth; he prevail'd with him to suffer that Dialogue to take its Fortune, which the Publisher hopes may be such, as may incourage the Author to communicate what he has further meditated upon such Subjects.

ERRATA.

pag. 3. lin. 3. read *Arnobius*. p. 9. l. 5. r. how. p. 25. l. 20. r. *continui*. p. 11. l. 21. r. *hucusque superata*. p. 33. l. 20. for near read above. p. 56. l. 18. r. deny. p. 60. l. 5. r. sight. p. 84. l. 7. r. men of. p. 86. l. ult. r. us; for. p. 92. l. 22. r. Time will. p. 93. l. 12. r. do. p. 4. l. 12. r. bare repetition. p. 34. l. 6. r. Body. p. 41. l. 3. r. instance. p. 43. l. 10. r. gy. p. 48. l. 26. r. -sonety. p. 59. l. 3. r. thing. p. 62. l. 1. r. evidence of.

A

DISCOURSE
OF
Things
ABOVE
REASON.

ENQUIRING,

Whether a Philosopher should
admit there are any such.

The Speakers are, *Sophronius, Eugenius, Pyrocles, and Timotheus.*

Euge. **T**HE Seriousness you
yet retain in your
looks, and the po-
sture we found you
in at our entrance, makes me fear
these two Gentlemen and I are un-
B Reasonable

seasonable intruders, that are so unhappy as to disturb your Meditations.

Sophron. Instead of doing that, you will much promote them, if you please to accompany me in them: For the subject that busied my thoughts is both so abstruse and so important, that it needs more than one to consider it, and deserves that He should be a far better considerer than I, who therefore must think my self far less fit for that task than you.

Eug. I will punish the flattery of these last words, by declining to make any Return to it.

Pyrocl. And I, Gentlemen, to prevent the loss of time and words between you, shall without farther Ceremony ask *Sophronius*, what his thoughts were employed about when we came in.

Sophr. I was then musing upon a
Subject,

Subject, that was newly proposed to me by our common Friend *Arnobius*, who would needs have my opinion, *Whether*, and if at all, *how far*, we may employ our reasonings about things that are above our Reason, as Christians grant some mysteries of their Religion to be.

Euge. If, by *things above Reason*, be meant only those, that are undiscoverable by Reason without Revelation; I should not hesitate to say, that there may be divers things of that kind: For the free Decrees of God, and his determinations concerning the Government of the World, and the future state of mankind (to name now no others) are things which no humane Reason can pry into, but must owe the fundamental discovery it makes of them, to the Revelation of him, whose purposes they are.

But if, by *things above Reason*, be meant such, as though delivered in words, free from darkness and Ambiguity, are not to be conceived,

and comprehended by our Rational Faculty, I shall freely confess, that I scarce know what to say upon so unusual and sublime a subject.

Pyrocl. For my part, Gentlemen, I think it were very requisite to be sure in the first place, that the subject of our Discourses is not Chimerical, but that we can really know, that there are things we cannot comprehend, though they be proposed to us in expressions no less clear than such, as would suffice to make other things intelligible to us.

Sophr. Your cautiousness, *Pyrocles*, must not be rejected by me, who when, before you came in, I was putting my thoughts into some order, judg'd it unfit to consider, either how one might know what things were to be look'd on as above Reason, how far we may discourse of them, or whether or no any supernaturally revealed Propositions, such as Divines call Articles of Faith, ought

ought to be reckoned among them, till I should have first seriously enquir'd, whether in general we ought to admit any such Objects of our Contemplation, as these, and the like Questions suppose.

Euge. I hope then that this being the first thing you purposed to enquire into, we may, without too much boldness, desire to know what came into your mind about it.

Sophr. If I had brought my considerations to an issue upon that subject, I should with less reluctancy acquaint you with them; but I since I have yet made but an imperfect progress in my enquiry, instead of delivering any positive opinion upon so abstruse a subject, I shall only tell you, that as far as I could yet discern, it seemed to me that among the Objects, our reason may contemplate there are *some* whose Nature we cannot comprehend, others whose Attributes or Actions are such, as that we cannot understand

how they should belong to the Subject, or else that we cannot conceive how they should consist with some acknowledged Truth.

Euge. So that if I apprehend you right, you do not only admit some things to be above Reason, but make no less than three sorts of them.

Sophr. If you will needs have two of them to be coincident, I shall not much contend, but I think the number you have named may, without any great inconvenience, be admitted: For by things above Reason, I here understand (not false or absurd ones, but) such, as though the Intellect sees sufficient cause (whether on the score of Experience, Authentick Testimony, or Mathematical Demonstration) to assent to; yet it finds it self reduc'd when 'tis conversant about them, to be so with a notable and peculiar disadvantage: And this disadvantage does usually proceed either from the nature of the thing proposed, which is such, that

that we cannot sufficiently comprehend it, or from our not being able to conceive the manner of its existing and operating ; or from this, that it involves some notion or proposition, that we see not how to reconcile with some other thing, that we are perswaded to be a truth. The first of these three sorts of things, may, for brevity and distinction sake be called *Incomprehensible*, the second *Inexplicable*, and the third *Unfociable*. But for fear lest the shortness I have used in my expressions, may have kept them from being so clear, I shall somewhat more explicitly reckon up the three sorts of things that seem to me above Reason.

The first consists of those whose Nature is not distinctly and adequately comprehensible by us : To which sort perhaps we may refer all those intellectual Beings (if it be granted that there are such) as are by nature of a higher order than humane Souls. To which sort some of the Angels (at least of the good ones)

ones) may probably belong ; but more than probably we may refer to this Head, the Divine Author of Nature, and of our Souls, *Almighty God*, whose perfections are so boundless, and his Nature so very singular, that 'tis no less weakness than presumption to imagine, that such finite Beings as our Souls, can frame full and adequate *Idea's* of them : We may indeed know by the consideration of his works, and particularly those parts of them that we our selves are, both *That he is*, and in a great measure *What he is not* ; but to understand thoroughly *What he is*, is a task too great for any but his own infinite Intellect : And therefore I think we may truly call this immense Object , in the newly declared sence, *supra-Intellectual*.

Euge. I suppose I may now ask what is the second sort of Things above Reason?

Sophr. It consists of such , as
though

though we cannot deny *that they are*, yet we cannot clearly and satisfactorily conceive, *how they can be such* as we acknowledge they are. As *how Matter can be infinitely*, (or which is all one, in our present discourse, *indefinitely*) *divisible*: And how there should be such an *incommensurableness* betwixt the Side and Diagonal of a Square, that no measure, how small soever, can adequately measure both the one and the other.

That Matter is endlessly divisible, is not only the assertion of *Aristotle* and the Schools, but generally embraced by those rigid Reasoners, Geometricians themselves; and may be farther confirm'd by the other instance of the Side and *Diagonal* of a Square, whose incommensurableness is believed upon no less firm a proof, than a demonstration of *Euclid*, and was so known a truth among the Ancients, that *Plato* is said to have pronounced him rather a Beast than a Man, that was a stranger to it. And yet if continued quantity,

quantity be not divisible without stop, how can we conceive but that there may be found some determinate part of the side of a Square, which being often enough repeated, would exactly measure the Diagonal too. But though Mathematical Demonstrations assure us, that these things are so, yet those that have strained their Brains, have not been able clearly to conceive how it should be possible, that a Line (for instance) of not a quarter of an inch long, should be still divisible into lesser and lesser portions, without ever coming to an end of those subdivisions; or how among the innumerable differing partitions into aliquot parts, that may be made of the side of a Square, not one of those parts can be found exactly to measure so short a Line as the Diagonal may be.

Euge. There is yet behind, *Sophronius*, the third sort of those things, which, according to you, surpass our Reason.

Sophr.

Sophr. I shall name that too, *Engenius*, as soon as I have premised that some of the Reasons that moved me to refer some instances to this head, do not so peculiarly belong to those instances, but that they may be applicable to others, which 'twas thought convenient to refer to the second or first of the foregoing Heads. And this being once intimated, I shall proceed to tell you, that the *third sort* of things that seem to surpass our Reason, consists of those, to which the Rules and Axioms and Notions, whereby we judge of the truth and falshood of ordinary, or other things, seem not to agree.

This third sort being such as are incumbred with Difficulties or Objections, that cannot directly and satisfactorily be removed by them that acquiesce in the received Rules of subordinate Sciences, and do reason but at the common rate, such Objects of Contemplation as this third sort consists of, having something belonging to them, that seems
not

not reconcilable with some very manifest, or at least acknowledged Truths.

This it may here suffice to make out by a couple of Instances, the one of a Moral, the other of a Mathematical Nature: And first, that Man has a free will, in reference at least to civil matters, is the general confession of Mankind: All the Laws that forbid and punish Murder, Adultery, Theft, and other Crimes, being founded on a Supposition, that men have a power to forbear committing them, and the sense men have of their being possesst of this power over their own actions, is great enough to make Malefactors acknowledg their punishments to be just, being no less condemned by their own Consciences, than by their Judges.

And yet (some *Socinians*, and some few others excepted) the generality of Mankind, whether Christians, Jews, Mahometans, or Heathens, ascribe to God an infallible Prescience of humane Actions, which

which is supposed by the belief of Prophecies, and the recourse to Oracles, by one or other of which two ways the Embracers of the several Religions newly mentioned, have endeavoured and expected to receive the informations of future things, and such as depend upon the Actings of men. But how a certain fore-knowledg can be had of contingent things, and such as depend upon the free will of man, is that which many great wits that have solicitously tryed, have found themselves unable clearly to comprehend, nor is it much to be admired that they should be puzzled to conceive how an infinitely perfect Being should want Prescience, or that their will should want that liberty, whereof they feel in themselves the almost perpetual exercise.

The other instance I promised you, *Euge.* is afforded me by Geometricians: For these (you know) teach the divisibility of Quantity *in infinitum* or without stop, to be
Mathe-

Mathematically demonstrable. Give me leave then to propose to you a strait line of three foot long divided into two parts, the one double to the other. I suppose then, that according to their doctrine a line of two foot is divisible into infinite parts, or it is not : If you say it is not, you contradict the demonstrations of the Geometricians; if you say that it is, then you must confess either that the line of one foot is divisible into as many parts as the line of two foot, though the one be but half the other, or else that the infinite parts, into which the line of one foot is granted to be divisible, is exceeded in number by the parts, into which the line of two foot is divisible, and consequently that the line of two foot has a multitude of parts greater than infinite. Which Reasonings may let us see that we may be reduced *either* to reject Inferences legitimately drawn from manifest or granted Truths, *or* to admit conclusions that appear absurd; if we *will* have *all* the common

mon Rules whereby we judge of other things to be applicable to Infinites.

And now, Gentlemen, having acquainted you with what sorts of things seem to be above Reason; I must, to prevent mistakes, desire you to take along with you this Advertisement: That though the nobleness and difficulty of so uncultivated a Subject, inclined me to offer something towards the elucidating of it, by sorting those things into three kinds; yet I shall not, and need not in this Conference, insist on them severally, or lay any stress on this partition. For though I have above intimated, that a Proposition may speak of somewhat that is *supra-intellectual*, or else contain somewhat which we cannot conceive how it may be true, or lastly teach us somewhat for a truth, that we cannot reconcile with some other thing, that we are convinced is true; yet if but any one of these have true Instances belonging to it, *That* may suffice for my main purpose

pole in this place, where I need only shew in general, *that there may be things that surpaſſour Reason*, at least ſo far, that they are not to be judged of by the ſame meaſures and rules, by which men are wont to judge of ordinary things, for which reaſon I ſhall often give them one common name, calling them *Priviledg'd Things*.

Euge. Methinks that to manifeſt the Imperfections of our Reason, in reference to what you call Priviledg'd Things, you need not have recourſe to the unfathomable Abyſſes of the Divine Nature, ſince for ought I know, *Pyrocles*, as well as I, may be non-plus'd by an inſtance that came into my mind *de Compoſitione continui*.

Timoth. Since *Sophronius* has not thought fit to give us any of the Arguments of the contending party's, I ſhall be glad to know what difficulty occurr'd to you.

Euge. Suppose a great Circle divided

vided into its three hundred and sixty degrees, and suppose that as great a number as you please or can conceive, of strait lines, be drawn from the several designable parts of some one of these degrees, to the Centre, 'tis manifest that the degrees being equal, as many lines may be drawn from any, and so from every one of the others, as from that degree which was pitched upon.

Then suppose a Circular Arch, equal to the assumed degree, to be further bent into the circumference of a little circle, having the same Centre with a great one, it follows from the nature of a Circle, and has been geometrically demonstrated, that the semi-diameters of a Circle how many soever they be, can no where touch one another but in the Centre. Whence 'tis evident, that all the lines that are drawn from the circumference to the Centre of the greater Circle, must pass by differing points of the circumference of the smaller, (for
C
else

else they would touch one another
 before they arrive at the Centre)
 and consequently that as many lines
 soever as can even mentally be
 drawn from the several points of
 the circumference of the great Cir-
 cle to the common Centre of both
 Circles, must all pass through dif-
 ferent points of the little Circle, and
 thereby divide it into as many parts
 (proportionably smaller) as the
 greater Circle is divided into: So
 that here the circumference of the
 lesser Circle presents us with a
 curve line, which was not possibly
 divisible into more parts than an
 Arch of one degree, or the three
 hundred and sixtieth part of the
 Circumference of the greater Cir-
 cle, and yet without being length-
 ened, becomes divisible into as ma-
 ny parts as the whole circumfe-
 rence of the same greater Circle.
 And though we should suppose the
 circumference of the internal Cir-
 cle not to exceed one inch, and that
 of the exterior Circle to exceed the
 circumference of the Terrestrial
Globe,

Globe, or even of the Firmament it self, yet still the demonstration would hold, and all the lines drawn from this vast Circle, would find distinct points in the lesser, to pass through to their common Centre.

Timoth. Though I will not pretend to confirm what *Sophronius* has been proving, by adding Arguments *a priori*; yet I shall venture to say, that I think it very agreeable both to the nature of God and to that of man, that what he has endeavoured to prove true should be so; for we men mistake and flatter Humane Nature too much, when we think our faculties of Understanding so unlimited, both in point of capacity and of extent, and so free and unprepossessed, as many Philosophers seem to suppose: For, whatever our self-love may incline us to imagine, we are really but created and finite Beings (and that probably of none of the highest orders of intellectual Creatures) and we come into the world, but such, as it pleased the Almighty and most

free Author of our Nature to make us. And from this dependency and limitedness of our Natures, it follows not only that we may be (for I now dispute not whether we are) born with certain congenit Notions and Impressions and Appetites or Tendencies of Mind ; but also that the means or measures which are furnished us to employ in the searching or judging of Truth, are but such as are proportionable to Gods designs in creating us, and therefore may probably be supposed not to be capable of reaching to all kinds, or if you please of Truths, *many* of which may be unnecessary for us to know here, and some may be reserved, partly to make us sensible of the imperfections of our Natures, and partly to make us aspire to that condition, wherein our faculties shall be much enlarged and heightned. It seems not therefore unreasonable to think , both that God has made our faculties so limited, that in our present mortal condition there should be some Objects beyond

beyond the comprehension of our Intellects (that is) that some of his creatures should not be able perfectly to understand some others, & yet that he has given us light enough to perceive that we cannot attain to a clear and full knowledge of them.

Pyrocl. I think, *Sophronius*, that I now understand what you mean by *Things above reason*, or as you (not unfitly) stiled them, *priviledged things*: But I presume you need not be told, that to explain the sense of a Proposition, and to make out the truth of it, (unless in common Notions, or things evident by their own light) are always two things, and oftentimes two very distant ones.

Sophr. I need not scruple, *Pyrocles*, to grant the truth of what you say, but I must not so easily admit your application of it; for among the examples, I have been proposing, there are some at least, that do not only *declare* what I mean by things above reason, but are instances,

ces, and consequently may be *proofs* that such things there are. And to those I could have added others, if I had thought it unlikely, that in the progress of our Conference there may be occasions offered of mentioning them more opportunely.

Pyros. I have long thought that the wit of man, was able to lay a fine varnish upon any thing that it would recommend ; but I have not till now found Reason set a work to degrade it self, as if it were a noble exercise of its power to establish its own impotency : And indeed 'tis strange to me , how you would have our Reason comprehend and reach things , that you your self confess to be above Reason, which is methinks, as if we were told that we may see things with our eyes that are invisible.

Sophr. I do not think, that 'tis to degrade the understanding, to refuse to idolize it, and 'tis not an injury to Reason, to think it a limited faculty, but an injury to the
 Author

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Author of it, to think man's understanding infinite, like his. And if what I proposed be well grounded, I assign Reason its most noble and genuine Exercise, which is to close with discovered Truths, in whose embraces the perfection of the Intellect too much consists, to suffer that perfective action to be justly disparaging to it: And a sincere understanding is to give, or refuse its assent to propositions according as they are or are not true, not according as we could or could not wish they were so; and methinks it were somewhat strange, that Impartiality should be made a disparagement in a Judge. But, *Pyrocles*, leaving the reflection with which you usher'd in your Objection, I shall now consider the Argument it self, which being the weightiest that can be framed against the opinion you oppose, I shall beg leave to offer some considerations, wherein I shall endeavour to answer it both by proving my Opinion by experience; and by

C 4

shewing

shewing that experience not to be disagreeable to Reason.

Pyrocl. I shall very willingly listen to what you have to say on such a subject.

Sophr. I shall then in the first place alledge the experience of many persons, and divers of them great Wits, who have perplexed themselves to reconcile, I say, not the Grace of God, but even his Prescience to the liberty of mans will, even in bare moral actions: And I have found partly by their Writings, and by discourse with some of them, that the most towring and subtle sort of Speculators, Metaphysicians, and Mathematicians, perchance after much racking of their brains, confess themselves quite baffled by the unconquerable difficulties they met with, not only in such abstruse subjects, as the nature of God, or of the humane Soul, but in the nature of what belongs in common to the most obvious Bodies in the world, and even to the least portions of them: You will easily

sily gueſs that I have my eye on that
 famous controverſie, Whether or
 no a continued quantity (which e-
 very body, as having length, bredth,
 depth, muſt be allowed to have) be
 made up of Indivifibles. Of the
 perplexing difficulties of this Con-
 troverſie, I might give you divers
 confeſſions, or complaints made by
 a ſort of men too much accuſtomed
 to bold aſſertions and ſubtle Argu-
 ments, to be much diſpoſed to make
 acknowledgments of that kind: But
 I ſhall content my ſelf with the te-
 ſtimony which one of the more fa-
 mous modern Schoolmen gives
 both of himſelf and other learned
 men, and which if I well remem-
 ber, he thus expreſſes. *Aggredi-*

mur comtinuiſ compositionem, cujus hu-
ejuſque non ſeparata difficultas omnium
Doctorem male ingenia vexavit, ne-
que ullus fuit qui illam non pene inſu-
perabilem agnoſcat. Hanc plerique
terminorum obſcuritate, illorumque
replicatis & implicatis diſtinctioni-
bus, & ſubdiſtinctionibus obtenebrant,
ne aperté capiantur deſperantes rem
poſſe

Ovid
 contr. 17.
 Phyf.

*posse alio modo tractari neque rationi
lucem sustinere, sed necessario confu-
sionis tenebris obtegendum, ne argu-
mentorū evidentia detegatur.*

And though he had not been thus candid in his confession, yet what he says might be easily concluded by him, that shall duly weigh with how great, though not equal force of Arguments, each of the contending parties imputes to the opinion it opposes, great and intolerable absurdities as contained in it, or legitimately deducible from it.

Eug. I have not the vanity to think that the weakness of my Reason ought to make another diffident of the strength of his: But as to my self, what *Sophronius* has been saying cannot but be confirm'd by several tryals, wherein having exerted the small abilities I had to clear up to my self some of the difficulties about Infinites: I perceived to my trouble, that my speculations satisfied me of nothing so much, as the disproportionateness of those abstruse subjects to my reason. But,
Sophro-

Sophronius, may it not be well objected, that though the Instances you have given, have not been hitherto cleared by the light of Reason; yet 'tis probable they may be so hereafter, considering how great progress is, from time to time, made in the discoveries of Nature, in this learned Age of ours.

Sophr. In answer to this question, *Eugenius*, give me leave to tell you first, that you allow my past discourse to hold good *for ought yet appears to the contrary*: Whence it will follow, that your Objection is grounded upon a hope, or at most a Conjecture about which I need not therefore trouble my self, till some new discoveries about the things in question, engage me to a new consideration of them. But in the mean while, give me leave to represent to you in the second place, that though I am very willing to believe, as well as I both desire and hope it, that this inquisitive Age we live in, will produce discoveries that will explicate divers of the
more

more hidden mysteries of Nature yet I expect that these discoveries will chiefly concern those things, which either we are ignorant of for want of a competent History of Nature, or we mistake by reason of erroneous Prepossessions, or for want of freedom and attention in our speculations. But I have not the like expectations as to all Metaphysical difficulties, (if I may so call them) wherein neither matters of Fact, nor the *Hypotheses* of subordinate parts of Learning, are wont much to avail. But however it be, as to other abstruse Objects, I am very apt to think, that there are some things relating to that infinite and most Monadical Being (if I may so speak) that we call *God*, which will still remain incomprehensible even to Philosophical understandings. And I can scarce allow my self to hope to see those Obstacles surmounted, that proceed not from any Personal infirmity, or evitable faults, but from the limited nature of the Intellect:

And

And to these two considerations,
Eugenius, I shall in answer to your
 question, add this also: That as
 mens inquisitiveness may hereafter
 extricate some of those grand diffi-
 culties, that have hitherto perplex-
 ed Philosophers; so it may possibly
 lead them to discover new difficul-
 ties more capable than the first, of
 baffling humane understandings.
 For even among the things where-
 with we are already conversant,
 there are divers which we think we
 know, only because we never with
 due attention, tryed whether we
 can frame such *Ideas* of them, as
 are clear and worthy for a rational
 seeker and lover of truth to acqui-
 esce in. This the great intricacy
 that considering men find, in the
 notions commonly receiv'd of space,
 time, motion, &c. and the difficul-
 ties of framing perspicuous and sa-
 tisfactory apprehensions even of
 such obvious things, may render
 highly probable. We see also that
 the Angle of Contact, the Doctrine
 of *Asymptotes*, and that of surd num-
 bers

bers and incommensurable Lines, all which trouble not common Accountants and Surveyors, (who though they deal so much in numbers and lines, seldom take notice of any of them) perplex the greatest Mathematicians, and some of them so much, that they can rather demonstrate, that such affections belong to them, than they can conceive how they can do so: All which may render it probable, that mens growing curiosity is not more likely to find the solutions of some difficulties, than to take notice of other things, that may prove more insuperable than they.

Tim. This conjecture of yours, *Sophronius*, is not a little favoured by the *Rota Aristotelica*; for though the motion of a Cart-wheel is so obvious and seems so plain a thing, that the Carman himself never looks upon it with wonder; yet after *Aristotle* had taken notice of the difficulty that occur'd about it, this trivial *Phænomenon* has perplex'd divers great Wits, not only School-

lines, Schoolmen, but Mathematicians,
 n Ac. and continues yet to do so, there
 (who being some circumstances in the
 num. progressive motion and rotation of
 otice the circumference of a Wheel, and
 reat- its Nave, or of two points assigned,
 e of the one in the former, and the o-
 a ra- ther in the latter, that have appear-
 cli- ed too subtle (and even to modern)
 hey Writers, so hard to be conceived
 so: and reconciled to some plain and
 ble, granted Truths, that some of them
 not have given over the solution of the
 of attending difficulties as desperate,
 no- which perchance, *Pyrocles*, would
 ve not think strange, if I had time to
 s, insist on the intricacies that are to
 ed be met with in a speculation; that
 h seems so easie as to be despicable.

Sophr. Your Instance, *Timotheus*,
 must be acknowledged a very preg-
 nant one, if you are certain that
 a better account cannot be given
 of the *Rota Aristotelica*, than is wont
 to be in the Schools, by those Peri-
 pateticks that either frankly con-
 fess the difficulties to be insoluble,
 or less ingenuously pretend to give
 solutions

solutions of them, that suppose things not to be proved, or perhaps so much as understood (as Rarefaction and Condensation strictly so called) or lose the question and perhaps themselves, by running up the dispute into that most obscure and perplexing Controversie *de compositione continui*.

Eugen. I am content to forbear pressing any further at present an Objection; much of whose force depends on future contingents, and I shall the rather dismiss the proof drawn from experience, that I may the sooner put you in mind of your having promised us another Argument to the same purpose, by manifesting the opinion to be agreeable to Reason.

Sophr. I understand your pleasure, *Eugenius*, and shall endeavour to comply with it, but the difficulty and intricateness of the Subject of our discourse, obliges me to do it by steps; and for fear we should want time for more necessary things, I will not now stay to examine
mine

mine whether all the things that hitherto have appeared above Reason, be impenetrable to us, because of an essential disability of our understandings, proceeding from the imperfection and limitedness of their nature, or only because of some other impediment, such as may be especially the condition of the soul in this life, or the infirmities resulting from its state of union with a gross and mortal body.

Forbearing then to discourse how this came into my mind, and what thoughts I had upon it, I shall proceed in my considerations; and to clear the way for those that are to follow, I shall in the first place observe to you, that whatever be thought of the faculty *in abstracto*, yet Reason operates according to certain Notions or Ideas, and certain Axiomes and Propositions, by which as by Prototypes or Models, and Rules and Measures, it conceives things, and makes estimates and judgments of them. And indeed when we say that such a thing

is consonant to Reason, or repugnant to it, we usually mean that it is either immediately or mediately deducible from, or at least consistent with, or contradictory to one or other of those standard Notions or Rules.

And this being premis'd, I consider in the next place, that if these Rules and Notions be such, as are abstracted only from finite things, or are congruous but to them; they may prove useless or deceitful to us, when we go about to stretch them beyond their measure, and apply them to the infinite God, or to things that involve an Infiniteness either in multitude, magnitude, or littleness.

To illustrate and confirm this notion, give me leave to represent in the third place, that in my opinion all the things that we naturally do know or can know, may be divided into these two sorts: The one such as we may know without a *Medium*; and the other such as we cannot attain to, but by the intervention of a *Me-*

a *Medium*, or by a discursive act. To the first belong such Notions as are supposed to be *connate*, or if you please *innate*, such as that *Two contradictories cannot be both together true*. The whole is greater than any part of it; *Every (entire) number is either even or odd, &c.* And also those other Truths, that are assented to upon their own account without needing any *medium* to prove them; because that as soon as, by perspicuous terms, or fit examples, they are clearly proposed to the understanding, they discover themselves to be true so manifestly by their own light, that they need not be assisted by any intervening Proposition, to make the Intellect acquiesce in them; of which kind are some of *Euclid's Axioms*, as that, *If to equal things equal things be added, the totals will be equal*; and that *two right lines cannot include a space*. To the second sort of things knowable by us, belong all that we acquire the knowledge of by *Ratiocinations*, wherein by the help of

intervening Propositions or *Medi-
ums*, we deduce one thing from a
nother, or conclude affirmatively
or negatively one thing of another.
This being supposed, and we being
conscious to our selves, if it were
but upon the score of our own infir-
mities and imperfections, that we
are not Authors of our own nature;
for ought we know it may be true,
and all the experience we have hi-
therto had, leads us to think it is
true, that the measures suggested
to us either by sensations, the re-
sults of sensible observation, or the
other instruments of knowledge,
are such as fully reach but to finite
things or Beings, and therefore are
not safely applicable to others. And
divers of those very Principles that
we think very general, may be (if
I may so speak) but gradual notions
of truth, and but limited and re-
spective, not absolute and univer-
sal.

And here give me leave, as a far-
ther consideration, to take notice to
you, that though perfect Syllogisms
be

be counted the best and most regular forms that our Ratiocinations can assume, yet even the laws of these are grounded on the doctrine of Proportions: For even between things equal there may be a proportion (namely that of equality) upon which ground I suppose it is, that Mathematical Demonstrations have been publickly proposed of the grand Syllogistical Rules. And in consequence of this, I shall add that Geometricians will tell you, that there is no proportion betwixt a finite line and an infinite, because the former can never be so often taken, as to exceed the latter, which according to *Euclid's* definition of Proportion, it should be capable to do. Of which Premises the use I would make is to perswade you, that since the understanding operates but by the Notions and Truths 'tis furnished with, and these are its instruments by proportion to which it takes measures, and makes judgments of other things; these Instruments may be too disproportion-

*Rationem
habere inter
se quantita-
tes dicuntur
que possunt
multiplica-
te, sese mu-
tuo superare.
Definit. 5.
Elem. V.
Euclidis.*

tionate to some Objects to be securely employed to determine divers particulars about them: So the eye being an instrument which the understanding employs to estimate distances, we cannot by that safely take the breadth of the Ocean, because our sight cannot reach far enough to discover how far so vast an object extends it self. And *not only* the common instruments of Surveyors that would serve to measure the height of an house or a steeple, or even a Mountain, cannot enable them to take the distance of the Moon; *but*, when Astronomers do, by supposition, take a chain that reaches to the Centre of the Earth, (and therefore is by the Moderns judged to be ^{above} *near* four thousand miles long) even then I say, *though* by the help of this and the Parallaxes, they may tolerably well measure the distance of some of the neerer Planets, especially the Moon; yet with all their great industry, they cannot by the same way (or perhaps any other yet known) with any

any thing tolerable acurateness, measure the distance of the fixed Stars; the Semidiameter of the Earth, bearing no sensible proportion to that of so vast a Sphere as the Firmament, whose distance makes the Parallaxes vanish, it being as to sense all one, whether at so great a remove, a Star be observ'd from the Centre, or from the surface of the Earth.

Eng. In a matter so abstruse, a little Illustration by examples, may be very proper and welcome.

Sophr. 'Tis scarce possible to find very apposite examples, to illustrate things of a kind so abstruse and heteroclite as those may well be suppos'd, that do surpass our Reason.

But yet some assistance may be borrowed from what we may observe in that other faculty of the mind, which is most of kin to the Intellect, I mean the *Imagination*: For when, for instance, I think of a Triangle or a Square, I find in my fancy an intuitive *Idea* (if I may so

call it) of those figures that is a Picture clear and distinct, as if a figure of three sides or four equal sides, and Angles were placed before my eyes.

But if I would fancy a *myriagon*, or a figure consisting of ten thousand equal sides, my Imagination is overpowered with so great a multitude of them, and frames but a confused *Idea* of a *Polygon* with a very great many sides: For if (to speak suitably to what the excellent *Des Cartes* has well observed in the like case) a man should endeavour to frame *Ideas* of a *Myriagon* or a *Chiliagon*, they would be both so confused, that his Imagination would not be able clearly to discriminate them, though the one has ten times as many sides as the other. So if you would imagine an *Atome*, of which perhaps ten thousand would scarce make up the bulk of one of the light particles of dust, that seem to play in the Sunbeams when they are shot into a darkned place, so extraordinary a littleness

not having fallen under any of our Senses, cannot truly be represented in our imagination. So when we speak of Gods Primity (if I may so call it) Omnipotence, and some other of his infinite Attributes and Perfections, we have some conceptions of the things we speak of, but may very well discern them to be but inadequate ones: And though divers Propositions relating to things above Reason, seem clear enough to ordinary Wits, yet he that shall with a competent measure of attention, curiosity, and skill, consider and examine them; shall find that either their parts are inconsistent with one another, or they involve contradictions to some acknowledged or manifest Truths, or they are veil'd over with darkness and incumbered with difficulties, from whence we are not able to rescue them. Thus when the side and Diagonal of a Square are proposed, we have clear and distinct *Ideas* of each of them apart, and when they are compared, we

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may

may have a conception of their incommensurableness. But yet this negative notion, if it be thoroughly considered, and far enough pursued, clearly contains that of a straight line being divisible *in infinitum*, and that divisibility is incumbred with so many difficulties, and is so hard to be reconciled to some confessed dictates of Reason, that (as we have seen already) Philosophers and Geometricians that are convinc'd of the truth, are to this day labouring to extricate themselves out of those perplexing intricacies.

I will not trouble you with the puzzling, if not insuperable difficulties, that incumber the doctrine of *Eternity*, as 'tis wont to be proposed in the Schools of Divines and Philosophers, lest you should alledge that these difficulties spring rather from the bold assumptions and groundless subtleties of the Schoolmen, than from the nature of the thing it self: But I will propose somewhat that cannot be denied,

denyed, which is, that some substance or other, whether, as I believe, *God*, or as the Peripateticks say, the *World*, or as the Epicureans contend, *Matter*, never had a beginning, that is, has been for ever. But when we speak of an eternity *à parte ante* (as they call it) we do not speak of a thing whereof we have no conception at all, as will appear to a considering person, and yet this general notion we have is such, that when we come attentively to examine it, by the same ways by which we judge of almost all other things, the Intellect is non-plus'd: For we must conceive, that the time efflux'd since *Adam* (or any other man as remote from us as he is said to have been) began to live, bears no more proportion to the duration of *God*, or of *Matter*, than to those few minutes I have imployed about mentioning this instance. Nay if we would be Aristotelians, the same thing may be said as to those men, that lived many thousand millions of years before

before the time we reckon that
adam began to live in. For each
 these times being finite and mea-
 rable by a determinate number
 years, can bear no proportion
 that infinite number of years (or
 somewhat that is equivalent) which
 must be allowed to a duration that
 never had a beginning. And as
 there are some things whose nature
 and consequences pose our Facul-
 ties, so there are others, whereof
 though we have a notion, yet the
modus operandi is beyond our com-
 prehension, I do not mean only the
 true and certain *modus operandi*, but
 even an *intelligible* one. As, though
 divers learned men, especially Car-
 tésians, and that upon a Philoso-
 phical account, assert, that God
 created the world, yet how a sub-
 stance could be made out of no-
 thing (as they, and the generality
 of Christians confessedly hold) I
 fear we cannot conceive. And
 though all Philosophers, very few
 excepted, believe God to be the
Maker of the World (out of pre-
 existent

existent matter) yet how he could make it but by locally moving the parts of the Matter it was to consist of, and how an incorporeal substance can move a body, which it may pass through without resistance, is that which I fear will be found hardly explicable: For if it be said, that the Soul, being an immaterial substance, can never the less move the Limbs of the humane Body rightly dispos'd, I shall answer that it does not appear that the rational Soul doth give any motion to the parts of the Body, but only *guide* or *regulate* that which she finds in them already.

Timoth. May it not then be rationally said, that by making observations of such things that are the proper Objects of our faculties, and by making legitimate deductions from such observations, and from our other knowledges whether innate or acquired, we may come to be certain, that some things are, and so have general and dark Ideas of them, when at the same time

time we are at a loss to conceive *how they can be* such, or how they can operate and perform what they do, supposing the Truth and sufficiency of some other things we are convinced of. To be short, negative apprehensions we may have of some priviledged things, and positive, but indistinct apprehensions we may have of others, and that is enough to make us in some sort understand our selves, and one another, when we speak of them, though yet when we sufficiently consider what we say, we may find that our words are not accompanied with clear, distinct, and symmetrical conceptions, of those abstruse and perplexing things we speak of. And since, as hath been already shewn, we find by experience, that we are unable sufficiently to comprehend things, that by clear and legitimate consequences may be evinc'd to be, why should not this cogently argue, that some of our conceptions may be of things, to which somewhat belongs that

conceiv that transcends our Reason , and
 how the surpasses our comprehension? And
 at the if I would play the Logician with
 d suffi *Pyrocles*, I would tell him that his
 we are Objection destroys his Opinion :
 nega For since he talks to us of what is
 ave of incomprehensible, that term must
 posi or must not be attended with some
 nsions fuitable *Idea* : If it be not, let him
 that consider, whether in his own Phrase
 fort he speaks sense and not like a Par-
 ano rot; but if it be, let him then con-
 em, fess, that one may have some kind
 ntly of *Idea* of a thing incomprehen-
 ind sible. But, *Pyrocles*, whether or
 pa no you think I prevaricate in this,
 n- you will not, I hope, suspect me of
 b- doing it, in adding that when na-
 ve tural Theology had taught men,
 n (as well Philosophers as others) to
 believe God to be an infinitely per-
 - fect Being, we ought not to say that
 they had no *Idea* of such a Being,
 because they had not a *clear and ad-*
equate one. And since *Aristotle*
 discourses *ex professo* and prolixly
 enough, *de infinito*, and cites the
 ancients Philosophers for having
 done

done so before him, and since (besides his Commentators and Followers) *Democritus*, *Epicurus*, followed by *Gassendus* and other late Philosophers, maintain either that the world is boundless, or that space (real or imaginary) is not *finite* in extent, or that the world consists of Atoms *infinite* in number; I hope you will not put such an affront upon all these great persons, as to think they said they knew not what, when they discoursed *de infinito*, as they must have done, if they spake without *Ideas* of the things they spake of, though it may be justly supposed, that the Subject being *infinite*, the *Ideas* they framed of it, could not be *comprehensive* and accurate.

Eug. So that according to you, *Sophronius*, it may be said, that by reason we do not properly perceive Things above Reason, but only perceive that they are above Reason, there being a dark and peculiar kind of Impression made upon the understanding, while it sets it self

to contemplate such confounding Objects, by which peculiarity of impression, as by a distinct and unwonted kind of internal sensation, the understanding is brought to distinguish this sort of things (namely) transcendent or *priviledg'd* ones from others, and discern them to be disproportionate to the powers with which it uses thoroughly to penetrate Subjects, that are not impervious to it. As when the Eye looks into a deep Sea, though it may pierce a little way into it, yet when it would look deeper, it discovers nothing but somewhat which is dark and indistinct, which affects the sensory so differing from what other more genuine objects are wont to do, that by it we easily discern, that our sight fails us in the way before it arrives at the bottom, and consequently that there may be many things conceal'd there, that our sight is unable to reach.

Timothy I guess, Gentlemen, by this silence you seem to conspire in

after so long a debate, that you have now said as much as at present you think fit to say for and against this Proposition; that there are Things above our Reason.

Sophr. I shall not, for my part, cross your Observation, *Timotheus*, but instead of adding any new proofs, shall only desire you to look back upon those I have presented you already, and to let me remind you, that of the two Arguments by which I attempted to shew that there are some things above Reason, the first and chiefest was suggested by Experience, and the other which was drawn from the nature of things and of man, was brought as 'twere, *ex abundanti*, to illustrate and confirm the former, and give occasion to some hints about priviledg'd Subjects. And therefore though I hope what has been discours'd by these Gentlemen and me, may be able to perswade *Pyrocles*, that the acknowledgment that some things are above Reason may fairly comply with the dictates

States of it, yet whatever he thinks of the cogency of our discourse, the truth of the main conclusion may be sufficiently evinc'd by our first Argument drawn from experience : For if we really find, that there are things which our Reason cannot comprehend, then whether the account these Gentlemen and I have given, why our faculties are insufficient, for these things be good or not; yet still some true account or other there must be of that insufficiency. And as we should very thankfully receive from *Pyrrhus*, any better account than what we have propounded, so if he cannot assign any better, I hope he will joyn with us in looking upon this, as very agreeable to our Hypothesis; since hereby some things must appear to us so sublime and abstruse, that not only we find we are not able to comprehend them, but that we are unable to discern so much as upon what account it is that they cannot be comprehended by us.

Eug. I am not averſe, *Sophronius*, from your Paradox about gradual notions, and I am the more inclin'd to think, that ſome of the Axioms and Rules that are reputed to be very general, are not to be indifferently extended to all Subjects and caſes whatſoever; when I conſider the differing apprehenſions that the mind may frame of the ſame object, as well according to the vigour or (if I may ſo call it) rank of the underſtanding, as according to the differing information 'tis furniſhed with: For if one ſhould propoſe to a child, for inſtance, of four or five years old, the demonſtration of the one hundred and ſeventeenth Propoſition of *Euclid's* tenth Book, wherein he proves the ſide and Diagonal of a Square to be incommenſurable, though poſſibly he may be able to read the words that expreſs the *Theorem*, and though he have eyes to ſee the Scheme imploied for the demonſtration, yet if you ſhould ſpend a whole year about it, you

you would never be able to make
 him understand it, because 'tis quite
 above the reach of a Childs capaci-
 ty: And if one should stay till he
 be grown a man, yet supposing
 him to have never learned Geome-
 try, though he may easily know
 what you mean by two incommen-
 surable lines, yet all the reason he
 has attained to in his virile age,
 would but indispose him to attain
 to that demonstration; for all the
 experience he may have had of
 lines, will but have suggested to
 him as a manifest and general
 truth, that of any two strait lines
 we may by measuring find how ma-
 ny Feet, Inches, or other determi-
 nate measure, the one exceeds the
 other. And though one that has
 been orderly instructed in all that
 long train of Propositions, that in
Euclid's Elements precede the one
 hundred and seventeenth of the
 tenth Book, will be also able to ar-
 rive at an evidence of this truth,
 that those two Lines are incommensu-
 rable; yet (as *Sophronius* formerly
 E 3 noted)

noted) how it should be possible that two short Lines being proposed, whereof each by it self is easily measurable among those innumerable multitudes of parts into which each of them may be mentally divided, there should not be any one capable of exactly measuring both, is that which even a Geometrician that knows it is true, is not well able to conceive. But, Gentlemen, that you may not accuse my digression, I shall urge these comparisons no further, my scope in mentioning them being to observe to you, that for ought we know to the contrary, such a difference of intellectual Abilities as is but gradual in Children and Men, may be essential in differing ranks of Intellectual Beings. And so it may be, that some of those Axioms that we think general, may, when we apply them to things whereof they are not the true and proper measures, lead us into error, though perhaps Intellects of an higher order may unriddle those difficulties that

that confound us men, which conjecture I should confirm by some things that would be readily granted me by Christians, if I thought it proper to play the Divine in a discourse purely Philosophical.

Pyrocl. You, Gentlemen, have taken the liberty to make long discourses, and I shall not much blame you for it, because 'tis a thing as more easily, so more speedily done, to propose difficulties than to solve them; yet methinks amongst you all, you have left one part of my Objection unanswer'd, not to say untouch'd.

Sophr. I suppose, *Pyrocles*, you mean what you said about discerning invisible things with the Eye, but I purposely forbore to take notice of *that*, because I foresaw it might be more seasonably done, after some other points had been clear'd: Wherefore give me leave *now* to represent to you, as a Corollary from the foregoing discourses, that nothing hinders but that we may reasonably suppose, that

the great and free Author of humane nature, God, so framed the nature of Man, as to have furnish'd his Intellectual Faculty with a light, whereby it cannot only make estimates of the power of a multitude of other things, but also judge of its own nature and power, and discern some at least of the limits beyond which it cannot safely exercise its act of particularly and peremptorily judging and defining. And now that God, who (as I said) is a most free Agent, may have given the mind of Man such a limited nature, accompanied with such a measure of light, you will not I presume deny, but the question is, you will tell me, whether he *hath* done so? But I hope what has been formerly discoursed by these Gentlemen and me, has put that almost quite out of question. However, I shall now invite you to observe with me, that the Rational Soul does not only pass judgments about things without her, but about her self, and what passes within her: She

She searches out and contemplates her own spirituality and union with the Body. The Intellect judges wherein its own nature consists, and whether or no it self be a distinct faculty from the Will ; and to come yet closer to the point, be pleased to consider, that Logick and Metaphysicks are the works of the Humane Intellect , which by framing those disciplines , manifests, that it does not only judge of Ratiocinations, but of the very Principles and Laws of Reasoning, and teaches what things are necessary to the obtaining of an Evidence and Certainty , and what kind of *Mediums* they are from whence you must not expect any demonstrative Arguments , concerning such or such a subject. To these things it is agreeable, that if we will compare the bodily Eye with the Understanding, which is the Eye of the Mind, we must allow this difference, that the Intellect is as well a Looking-glass as a Sensory, since it does not only see other things but
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it self too, and can discern its own blemishes or bad conformation, or whatever other infirmities it labours under. Upon which consideration, we may justify the boldness of our excellent *Verulam*, who when he sets forth the four sorts of Idols (as he calls them) that mislead the students of Philosophy, makes one of them to be *Idola Tribus*, by which he means those Notions, that tho' radicated in the very nature of mankind, are yet apt to mislead us, which may confirm what I was saying before, that the Soul, when duly excited, is furnished with a light, that may enable her to judge even of divers of those original Notions, by which she is wont to judge of other things. To be short, the Soul upon tryal may find by an inward sense, that some things surpass her forces, as a blind man that were set to lift up a rock would quickly find it too unweildy to be manag'd by him, and the utmost exercise of his strength would but convince him of the insufficiency of

of it, to surmount so great a weight or resistance ; so that we do not pretend that the Eye of the Mind should see Invisibles, but only that it shall discern the limits of that Sphere of Activity, within which Nature hath bounded it, and consequently that some Objects are disproportionate to it. And I remember that *Aristotle* himself says, that the eye sees both light and darkness, which expression, though somewhat odd, may be defended by saying, that though since darkness is a Privation, not a Being, it cannot properly be the object of sight, yet it may be perceived by means of the Eye, by the very differing affection which that Organ resents, when it is imprest on by luminous or enlightened Objects, and when it is made useless to us by darkness.

Timoth. What you have said, *Sophronius*, has in great part prevented one thing that might be said to strengthen *Pyrocles* his objection, namely, that *whereas* when we see with our bodily eyes, there is besides

sides the outward Organ an internal and rational faculty, that perceives by the help of the eye, that which is not directly the object of sight in the Eye of the Mind, the Intellect, there is but one faculty to perceive and judge: For according to your notion, it may be well answered, that the Intellect being capable by its proper light, to judge of it self and its own acts as well as of other things, there is no need of two Principles, the one to perceive and the other to judge, since one is sufficient for both those purposes.

Pyrocl. When I have time to reflect on all that I have heard alledg'd amongst you, Gentlemen, I shall consider how far your Arguments ought to obtain my assent: But in the mean while I must tell you, that they will scarce have all the success I presume you desire, unless you add somewhat to free me from what yet sticks with me of a scruple, that is much of the nature of that which I formerly proposed, being this;
How we can justify our presuming to
discourse

discourse at all of things transcending Reason? For I cannot understand how a man that admits your opinions, can intelligibly speak (and to speak otherwise mis-becomes a rational creature) of what is infinite or any thing that surpasses our reason; since when we discourse of such things, either our words are, or are not accompanied with clear and distinct *Ideas* or conceptions of the things we speak of: If *they be not*, what do we other than speak nonsense, or (as hath been already said) like Parrots entertain our Hearers with words, that we our selves do not understand; and if *they be*, then we do in effect *comprehend* those things, which yet you would have me think to be on some account or other, *Incomprehensible*.

Sophr. I acknowledge this difficulty, *Pyrocles*, to be a great one; but yet I think it not so great as that it ought to interdict us all discoursing of things above Reason: And this would perhaps appear probable enough, if, as your objection bor-

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rows much of what you have formerly alledg'd, so I may be allowed as well to repeat some things as propose others, in making answer to it.

Timoth. I for my part shall not only give you my consent to do so, but make it my request that you would do it, for when I look back upon our conference, methinks I plainly perceive that partly the objections of *Pyrocles*, and partly some (I fear impertinent) interpositions of mine, have kept your discourse from being so methodical as otherwise you would have made it, and therefore to be reminded of some of the chief points of your doctrine, as well as to connect them with those you shall judge fit to strengthen or illustrate them, may much conduce to make us both understand it more clearly, and remember it better.

Eug. I am much of your mind, *Timothens*, but though my interpositions have been far more frequent and much less pertinent than yours, yet I am not troubled that
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the method of our conference has been so much disturb'd ; because I think such a free way of discoursing, wherein emergent thoughts if they be considerable , are permitted to appear as they arise in the mind, is more useful than a nice method in a debate about an uncultivated and highly important subject, in which I think we should aim at first rather to inquire than to resolve, and to procure as many hints and considerations as we can, in order to our fuller information against our next meeting, without suppressing any that is true or useful, only because it agrees not so well with a regular method, as it does with the design of our conference.

Sophr. Without reflecting upon either of those Gentlemen that have been pleased to accuse themselves, I shall readily comply with the motion made by *Timothew*, and after having proposed some distinctions make application of them.

And the better to clear this matter in reference to *Pyrocles's* objection,

on, I shall first take the liberty to make some distinctions of the Notions or conceptions of the Mind and for brevity sake give names to those I have now occasion to employ. I consider then, that whether the conceptions or *Ideas* we have of things be simple or compounded, they may be distinguished into such as are particular or *distinct*, and such as are only general, dark, and confus'd, or indistinct: So when a Navigator to unknown Countries first gets a sight of Land, though he may be satisfied that it is Land, yet he has but a very dark and confus'd picture of it made in his eye, and cannot descry whether or no the shore be rocky, or what Creeks or Harbours (if any) it have in it; much less whether the Coast be well inhabited, and if it be, what kind of buildings it has; all which he may plainly and distinctly see upon his going ashore. And this mention of the Sea puts me in mind to point at another distinction, which is that of some things we

have

have an *adequate*, of others, but an *inadequate* conception; as if we suppose the Navigator I was speaking of, should look towards the main Sea, though he might see a good way distinctly, yet at length it would appear so darkly and confusedly to him, that at the verge of the sensible Horizon, his sight would make him judge that the Sea and Sky come together, and yet he would conclude that the utmost part of the Sea he could descry, was but a part of the Ocean, which may, for ought he knows, reach to a vast extent beyond the visible Horizon.

To our confused, and often also to our inadequate conceptions, belong many of those that may be called Negative, which we are wont to imploy when we speak of Privations or Negations, as Blindness, Ignorance, Death, &c. We have a positive *Idea* of things that are square and round, and black and white, and in short of other things, whose shapes and colours make

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them

them the objects of our sight: But when we say, for instance, that a Spirit or an Atome is invisible, those words are attended with a negative conception, which is commonly but dark and confused because 'tis indefinite, and removes or lays aside those marks, by which we are wont clearly to perceive and distinguish visible substances: And when we say that such a thing is impossible, we have some kind of conception of what we speak of, but 'tis a very obscure and indistinct one at best, exhibiting only a general and very confused representation of some ways, whereby one might think the thing likely to be effected if it were at all performable, accompanied with a perception of the insufficiency of those ways. There is yet another difference in the notions we have of things, which though not wont to be observed, is too important to be here pretermitted, and it is this: That of some things we have a knowledg, that for want of a fitter term

: But term may be called primary or direct, and of some other things the knowledge we have is acquired but by inferring it from some more known or clearer truth ; and so may be called inferr'd or illative knowledge. As when a Geometrician defines to me an *Hyperbole*, I quickly gain a clear and distinct *Idea* of it, but when he proves to me that this *Hyperbole* may have such a relation to a strait line which he calls *Asymptote*, that this line being continued still comes nearer and nearer to the prolonged side of the *Hyperbole*, and yet how far soever both be drawn, 'twill never come to touch it, his subtil demonstrations present me with an infer'd or illative truth, at which we arriv'd not but by the help of a train of ratiocinations, and on which if we exercise our imagination, we shall find this factitious truth, if we may so call it, accompanied but with a very dim and confused *Idea*. To the foregoing distinctions, give me leave to add but this one more,

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which belongs chiefly to the notions we have of true or false propositions, namely, that of our conceptions of things, some are *Symmetrical* (if I may so call them) or every way consistent, by which I mean those that have these two qualifications, the *one* that all the parts are consistent among themselves, and the *other* that the entire *Idea* is consistent with all other truths; and some are *Chymical* or *Asymmetrical*, by which I understand those that are *either* self-destroying by the contrariety of the parts themselves they are made up of, as if one should talk of a triangular square, or a Sunshiny night; *or* being extravagant, lead to some manifest absurdity, that may be legitimately inferred from them, or into inextricable difficulties, or involve a real repugnancy to some acknowledg'd truth, or rule of Reason.

To what I have hitherto said, I must add these two observations: The First, that the mind of Man is so framed, that when she is duly instructed

instructed and is not wanting to herself, she can perceive a want of light in her self for some purposes, or of clearness and completeness in the best *Ideas* she is able to frame of some things, and on this account can so far take notice of the extent and imperfection of her own faculties, as to discern that some objects are disproportionate to her. As when we attentively consider the dimensions of space, or (if the Cartesians judge aright, that body is nothing but extended substance) those of the Universe, we may by trial perceive that we cannot conceive them so great, but that they may be yet greater, or if you please may exceed the bounds, how remote soever, which our former conception presum'd to assign them; which may be illustrated by what happens to the eye, when it looks upon the main Sea, since we easily grow sensible that how far soever we can discover it, yet our sight falls far short of the extent of that vast object. And 'tis by the sense

which the mind has of her own limitedness and imperfection on certain occasions; that I think we may estimate what things ought not and what ought to be looked upon as *Things above Reason*; for by this Term, I would not have you think I mean such things as our rational faculty cannot at all reach to, or has not any kind of perception of; for of such things we cannot in particular either speak or think like men. But my meaning is this, that whereas the rational Soul is conscious to her own acts, and feels, that she knows divers sorts of things truly and clearly, and thereby justly concludes them to be within the compass of her faculties; when she contemplates some few things that seem to be of another order, she is convinc'd that however she strain her power, she has no such Idea or perception of them, as she has or may have of those objects that are not disproportionate to her faculties: And this is my first Observation.

The

The other thing that I was to observe about the nature of the Mind is, that 'tis so constituted, that its faculty of drawing consequences from known truths, is of greater extent than its power of framing clear and distinct *Ideas* of things; so that by subtle or successive inferences, it may attain to a clear conviction that some things *are*, of whose nature and properties (or at least of some of them) it can frame no clear and satisfactory conceptions. And that men should be better able to infer propositions about divers things, than to penetrate their nature, needs the less be wondered at, *both* because 'tis oftentimes sufficient for our uses to know that such things are, though that knowledge be not accompanied with a clear and distinct *Idea*; and because oftentimes the Rules (such as, *whatever is produced must have a cause*; and, *from Truth, nothing rightly follows but Truth*) are clear and easie that enable the Mind to infer conclusions about things, whose nature

is very dark, and abstruse:

Eug. I know, *Sophronius*, that you have not laid down these preliminary distinctions and remarks without designing to make use of them, which the little time that now remains to manage our conference in, calls upon you to proceed to do.

Sophr. I was just going to say, *Eugenius*, that after what I have premised, I hope it may now be seasonable to apply the newly delivered Notions to the three sorts of things that I formerly represented as being in some sence *above reason*. For I consider, that there are some objects of so immense and peculiar a nature, that (if I may so speak) by an easie view of the mind, that is without any subtle and laborious disquisition, the Soul discerns, and as it were feels the Object to be disproportionate to her powers: And accordingly if she thinks fit to try, she quickly finds her self unable to frame conceptions of them fit to be acquiesc'd in, and this sort of Ob-
jects

jects I do upon that account call inconceivable, or (on some occasions) *supra-intellectual*.

But when by attentively considering the attributes and operations of things, we sometimes find that a thing hath some property belonging to it, or doth perform somewhat, which by reflecting on the beings and ways of working that we know already, we cannot discern to be reducible to them or derivable from them, we then conclude this property or this operation to be *inexplicable*; that is, such as that it cannot so much as in a general way be intelligibly accounted for, and this makes the second sort of our things above Reason. But this is not all, for the Rational Soul that is already furnished with innate, or at least primitive *Ideas* and Rules of true and false, when she comes to examine certain things and make successive inferences about them, she finds (sometimes to her wonder as well as trouble) that she cannot avoid admitting some
con-

consequences as true & good which
 He is not able to reconcile to some
 other manifest Truth or acknow-
 ledged Proposition : And whereas
 other Truths are so harmonious,
 that there is no disagreement be-
 tween any two of them, the Hete-
 roclite Truths I speak of appear not
 symmetrical with the rest of the
 body of Truths, and we see not
 how we can at once embrace these
 and the rest, without admitting that
 grand absurdity which subverts the
 very foundation of our reasonings,
That Contradictories may both be true.
 As in the controversie about the
 endless divisibility of a strait line,
 since 'tis manifest that a line of three
 foot for instance is thrice as long as
 a line of one foot, so that the shorter
 line is but the third part of the
 longer, it would follow that a part
 of a line may contain as many parts
 as a whole, since each of them is
 divisible into infinite parts, which
 seems repugnant to common sence,
 and to contradict one of those com-
 mon Notions in *Euclid*, whereon
 Geometry

Geometry it self is built. Upon which account I have ventured to call this third sort of things above Reason *Asymmetrical* or *Unsociable*, of which eminent instances are afforded us by those controversies (such as that of the *compositio continui*) wherein which side soever of the question you take, you will be unable *directly* and truly to answer the objections that may be urged to show that you contradict some primitive or some other acknowledged truth.

These, *Eugenius*, are some of the considerations by which I have been induced to distinguish the things that to me seem to overmatch our Reason, into three kinds. For of those things I have still *unconceivable*, our *Ideas* are but such as a moderate attention suffices to make the mind sensible that she wants either light or extent enough to have a clear and full comprehension of them: And those things that I have called *Inexplicable*, are those which we cannot perceive to depend

upon the *Ideas* we are furnished with, and to resemble in their manner of working any of the Agents whose nature we are acquainted with : And lastly , those things which I have named *Unsociable*, are such as have Notions belonging to them, or have conclusions deducible from them, that are (for ought we can discern) *either* incongruous to our primitive *Ideas* , or when they are driven home, inconsistent with the manifest Rules we are furnished with, to judge of True and False.

Eug. I presume, *Sophronius*, that by sorting things above Reason into three kinds, you do not intend to deny but that 'tis possible one object may in differing regards be referred to more than one of these sorts.

Sophr. You apprehend me very right, *Eugenius*, and the truth of what you say may sufficiently appear in that noblest of Objects , God.

Timoth. We owe so much to God, the most perfect of Beings,
not

not only for other blessings, but for those very Intellects that enable us to contemplate him, that I shall be very glad to learn any thing that may increase my wonder and veneration for an Object, to whom I can never pay enough of either.

Sophr. You speak like your self, *Timotheus*, and I wish I were as able as I ought to be willing, to satisfy your desire: But since we are now discoursing like Philosophers, not Divines, I shall proceed to speak of that gloriousst of Objects, But as his Nature or some of his Attributes afford me instances to the purpose, for which I presum'd to mention him. *When* God therefore made the World out of nothing, or (if *Pyrocles* will not admit the Creation) *when* he discerns the secretest thoughts and intentions of the Mind, *when* he unites an immaterial Spirit to a humane Body, and maintains, perhaps for very many years, that unparallel'd union with all the wonderful conditions he has annex'd to it; *when*, I say, he doth these

these and many other things, that I must not now stay to mention, he supplies us with instances of things that are *Inexplicable*: For such operations are not reducible to any of the ways of working known to us, since our own Minds can but modify *themselves* by divers manners of thinking; and as for things without us, all that one body can do to another by acting on it, is to communicate local motion to it, and thereby produce in it the natural consequences of such motion; in all which there is no action like any of those I just now ascrib'd to God. And if we consider that the præscience of those future events that we call contingent, being a perfection, is not to be denied to God; who is by all acknowledged the perfectest of Beings, and that yet the greatest Wits that have laboured to reconcile this infallible præcognition with the liberty of mans will, have been reduced to maintain some thing or other, that thwarts some acknowledged truth,

or

that I or dictate of Reason: If we duly consider this (I say) it will afford us an instance of truths, whose consistency and whose symmetry with the body of other truths, our Reason cannot discern, and which therefore ought to be referred to that sort of things above Reason, that I call *Unsociable*. And now I come to the third sort of these things which is that I formerly mention'd, first under the name of *Incomprehensible* or *supra-intellectual*: which Title, whether or no it belongs to any other Object, (which I will not now enquire) doth certainly belong to *God*, whose Nature comprehending all perfections in their utmost possible degrees, is not like to be comprehensible by our minds, who altogether want *divers* of those perfections, and have but moderate measures, (not to call them shadows) of *the rest*. We are indeed born with, or at least have a power and divers occasions to frame an *Idea* of a Being infinitely perfect, and by this *Idea* we may suffi-

sufficiently discriminate the Original of it, God, from all other Objects whatsoever. But then, when we come to consider attentively & minutely what is contained in the notion of Omnipotence, Omniscience, Eternity, and those other divine Attributes that are all united in that great confluence and abyss of perfections, God; we may be sure to find, that our faculties are exceedingly surmounted by the vastness and gloriousness of that *unlimited and unparallel'd* object; about which, *as* we can discover that it *exists*, and that it possesses *all the perfection* we can conceive, *so* we may at the same time discern, that it must have *degrees of perfection*, which because of the inferiority of our Nature, we are not able to conceive.

And yet this discovery of Gods Incomprehensibleness may be made without subtle disquisitions, and without trains of consequences, though not without due attention, by a direct view of the Mind (if I
may

may so term it;) who finds her self upon tryal as unable fully to measure *the divine perfections* as the *dimensions of spate*, which we can conceive to be greater and greater, without ever being able to determine any extent beyond whose limits they cannot reach.

Pyrocles. I suspected *Sophron.* by the tenour of your Discourse that the last Questions these Gentlemen asked you, diverted you from saying somewhat more than you did by way of application of your preceding Discourse.

Sophron. I was then indeed about to make, as I now shall, this use of what I had been saying; that I readily acknowledge that 'tis an arrogance to talk of infinite or of priviledg'd things, with the same confidence, or to pretend to do it with the same clearness, wherewith knowing men may speak of things unquestionably within the compass of our Intellect: But that this need not hinder us from speaking, nor doth

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disable us from speaking rationally of priviledg'd things themselves. For all the notions that are allowable are not of the same sort or order ; and if none were to be admitted but those that enable us to comprehend the Object, that is, which give us a clear and distinct knowledge of all that it contains or that belongs to it, I must confess that we have no good Notions of priviledg'd things in particular: but then I must add, that I fear we have few or none even of many things that we think our selves very knowing in. And when we speak of things as being *above Reason*, though we have no clear, distinct and adequate Notion of them, yet we may have a general confus'd and inadequate Notion of them, which may suffice to make us discriminate their respective Objects from all else, and from one another ; as may be observ'd in several *Ideas* that are negatively fram'd, such as those we have of invisible, incomprehensible, and
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in others which I formerly call'd *Inferr'd* ; because they accompany the remote Inferences whereby one truth is concluded from another : as when Geometricians infer from some propositions in Euclid that any strait line may be divided farther and farther without stop. For of this and some other propositions about prividedg'd things, we are not quite destitute of allowable Notions ; as may appear by some of the admirably ingenious Speculations of Mathematicians about the Affections of *surd Numbers*, and about *incommensurable Magnitudes* ; about some of which we have no such clear and symmetrical Conceptions as we have of many other things, that are of a nearer and more intelligible order. And on this occasion I shall not scruple to acknowledge, that partly by my own Experience, and partly by the Confessions of others, and by their unsuccessful Attempts, I am induc'd to think that God, who is a most free Agent, having

been pleas'd to make Intelligent Beings, may perhaps have made them of differing Ranks, or Orders, whereof Men may not be of the Principal; and that whether there be such Orders or no, he hath at least made us Men, of a limited nature (in general) and of a bounded Capacity. Congruously to this I think also, that he hath furnished man either with certain innate *Ideas* or Models and Principles, or with a Faculty or Power and Disposition easily to frame them, as it meets with occasions (which readily occur) to excite them: But because that (as I lately noted) God intended the mind of Man but of a limited Capacity, his Understanding is so constituted that the inbred or easily acquir'd *Ideas* and primitive Axioms wherewith it is furnished, and by Relation or Analogy whereunto it judges of all other Notions, and Propositions, do not extend to all knowable Objects whatsoever; but reach only to such as have a sufficient Affinity,

or

or bear some proportion to those Primary *Ideas* and Rules of Truth, which are sufficient if duly improv'd, to help us to the attainment, though not of the perfect knowledge of truth's of the highest Orders, yet to the Competent Knowledge of as much truth as God thought fit to allow our minds in their present (and perchance laps'd) Condition, or state of Union with their mortal Bodies.

Eugen. Your Opinion, *Sophon.* if I apprehend it aright, contains two very differing Assertions; one that it is allowable to contemplate and even to discourse of things *above Reason*, since we may have some Conceptions of them, though they be but very dim and imperfect: and *the other*, that we ought not to look upon, or speak of such Objects as things that we *comprehend*, or have even such a measure of knowledge of, as we have of things that are not priviledg'd. For of these we are not to speak but with a peculiar Wariness,

ness, and modest Diffidence.
Sophron. You have express'd
 my thoughts *Eugen.* since I Intend
 not to injoyn silence, or dissuade
 Curiosity, but yet forbid presumption, in reference to priviledg'd
 things.

Timoth. And truly *Sophron.* I
 see no Reason to repine at the li-
 mits which your late Discourse
 hath in imitation of the Author of
 nature himself, assign'd to human
 Knowledg. For the number of
 priviledg'd things is altogether in-
 considerable in comparison of the
 multitude of other things, to which
 our knowledge may be improv'd
 to reach; and which it far more
 concerns us to know well, than it
 doth to resolve puzzling Questions
 about things incomprehensible;
 there being within the compass of
 those truths, enough to employ,
 and reward our Curiosity without
 straining and tiring our Reason a-
 bout Objects that transcend it. And
 yet even about *these*, some disqui-
 sitions may be allow'd us; for an
 object

object that on the account of some of its properties may be a privileged one; may have divers other things belonging to it, that do not surpass our Reason, and whose knowledge may therefore be attain'd, by the due employment of it.

Thus we usefully study the nature of Bodies, which make up the Object of the Excellent Science of Natural Philosophy; though the true Notion of Body in general be a thing so difficult to frame, that the best of our Modern Philosophers can by no means agree about it. Which I do not wonder at; because if we pursue the notion of a Body to the uttermost; 'twill lead us to the perplexing controversy, *De compositione continui*, and there you will not deny, but that the understanding will be left in the dark. Thus Surveyors, Carpenters, Architects, and many others know divers *Affections* of the square Figure that are of great use to them in their respective Employments,

though that *property* of the square, that *its side and diagonal are incommensurable*, be unknown to most of them; and if they were told of it, and would prosecute the Speculation, would involve them in exceeding great and probably insuperable difficulties.

Sophron. To confirm what you have been telling us, *Timoth.* I shall venture to add, that even about priviledg'd things, our inquiries, if modestly and discreetly manag'd, may not only be allowable but sometimes profitable. For even of such Subjects a studious search may bring us to know more than we did, though not so much as we would, nor enough to be acquiesc'd in. So that such enquiries may probably teach us, to know the Objects better, and our selves better too; by giving us such a sensible discovery of the insufficiency of our Understandings to comprehend all sorts of things, as may be very useful, though not pleasing, and may richly recompence

pence us, for the pains that ended in so instructive a disappointment. And let me add to the pertinent instances that have been mention'd, the noblest that can be given ; I mean the Contemplation of God himself. For he hath so ordered all things, that 'tis scarce possible for us, to be destitute of an *Idea* of him, which will at least represent him as an *existent Being*, and more *perfect* than any other Being ; and yet when we come with sufficient Application of mind to pry into the wonderful Attributes of this most singular and adorable Being, we are, as was lately observ'd, sure to find ourselves unable to comprehend so unbounded an Object. Which yet ought not to discourage us from so noble a Study, since we are allow'd the great contentment and honour to make further and further discoveries of the excellentest of Objects, by that very *immensity* of his perfections, that makes it impossible for us to reach to the bounds
of

of his Excellency, or rather to discover that it has any bounds at all.

But, Gentlemen, I perceive I have been so transported by the mention of this vast and divine Subject, in whose Contemplation 'tis so easy, and so pleasant to lose ones self, that I have forgot the notice *Eugen.* gave me, a pretty while since, that the time allotted for our present conference was then near expiring. And therefore I shall leave you to pick out of the Excursions to which your interpositions tempted (not to say oblig'd) me, the Applications, that I intended to make more methodically of the distinctions I laid down. And I am the less troubled to be hindred from proposing to you my thoughts about the way of distinguishing priviledg'd things from others, because we have a domestic Monitor, or a kind of an internal *Criterion* always at hand to help us. For I think it may well be said, that the wise Author of Nature has endued the Understanding

standing with such a quick, though internal, Sensation (if I may so call it) that when due attention is not wanting, it can feelingly discern between other Objects, and those that are disproportionate to its ability. As even in Beasts, the eye is so fram'd (according to the institution of Nature) that if it be obverted to the bright noon-day-Sun, there needs no Monitor, but the operation of the same Sun, to make it wink; (and perhaps water) and thereby discover it self to be dazled and overpowr'd by the disproportionate Object.

Pyroc. I confess your Discourses, Gentlemen, have made an unexpected Impression upon me; but whether that will amount to a Conviction will scarce appear till our next Conference. Only thus much I shall tell you now, that it would much facilitate our agreement in Opinion, if you did not contend for altogether so much, but would be pleas'd to leave it undetermin'd, whether Man's intellectual

Intellectual Faculty it self is incapable by the help of any degree of light, to discover and know those things, which you call above Reason? and would content your selves to say, That there are some things belonging to these Subjects, which we must confess we have less clear and distinct Notions of, than we have even of the difficultest of those things, that are acknowledged not to surpass our Reason: And that if we will take upon us, to determine positively and particularly about these transcendent things, we must employ ways of Reasoning, congruous to their peculiar natures.

Sophron. I shall readily consent not to expect your final Resolution, before our next meeting, having no cause to fear that time, will be unfriendly to her Daughter Truth.

Timoth. And in the mean while, *Pyrocles*, I am glad to find by the last part of what you just now said, that you seem to be no longer indisposed to admit some things, that

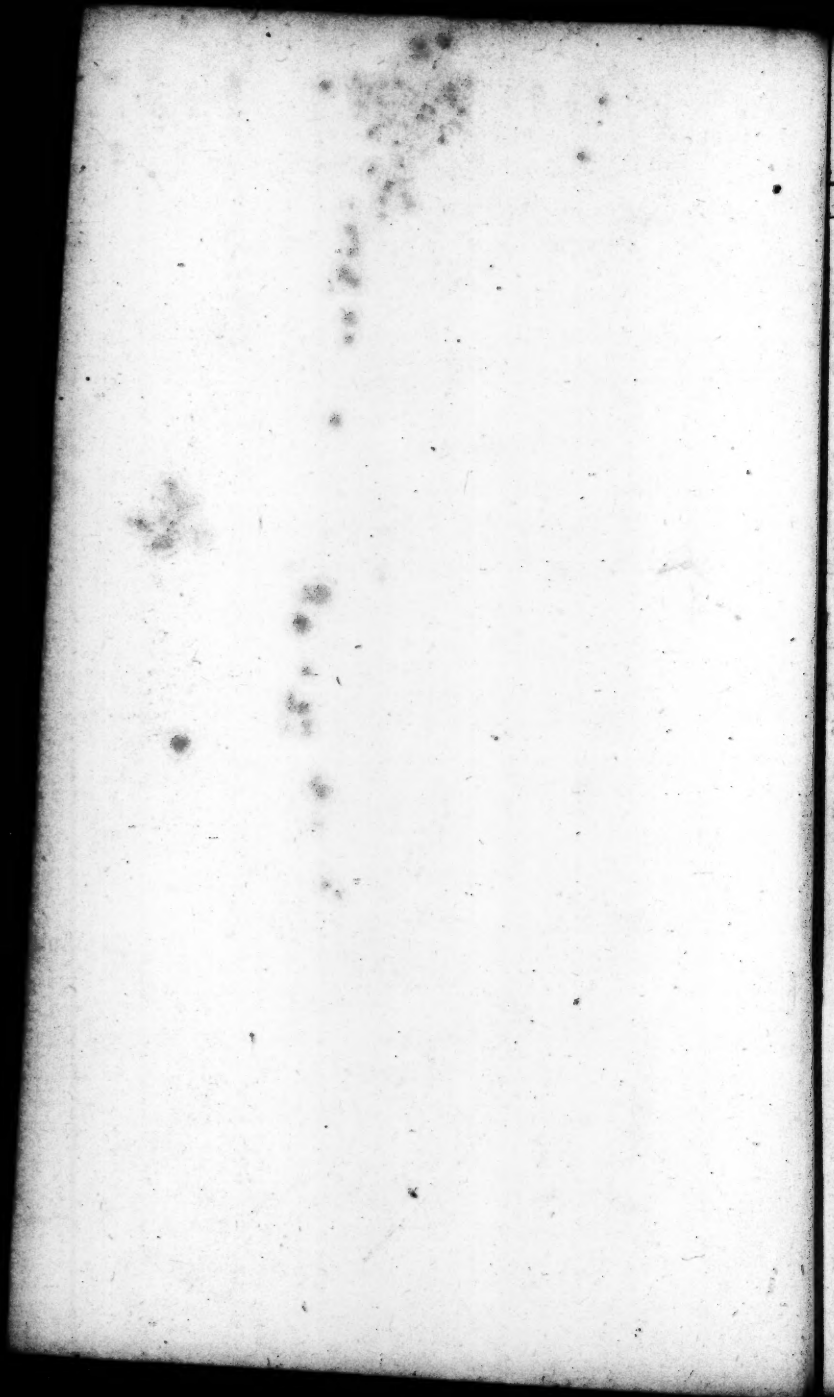
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(at least in our present state) do some way or other surpass our Reason. For I think that instead of *exalting* that faculty, we injure and *defraud* it, if we do not freely allow it, as much enjoyment of Truth as we are able to procure it: And consequently if Geometry, or Revelation, or Experience, assure us of divers things of which we can know but *That they are*, and *what they do*, not, *what they are*, and *how they act*, we must neither refuse, nor neglect the study of such Truths, any more than we would refuse *to look into* any other Objects, than those that we can *look through*; And therefore to enrich the Intellect as much as we are able, we must entertain, not only those Truths, that we can *comprehend*, but those also, how sublime soever, that we can have any *certain*, though but a very imperfect *Knowledge* of, Especially since those remote and abstruse Subjects may be as much more *noble* as more *dark* than others,

thers, and thereby render an imperfect Discovery of them, more desirable, than a far clearer one of Inferior things.

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ADVICES
IN
JUDGING
OF
Things
SAID TO
TRANSCEND
REASON.

The Speakers *Arnobius, Eugenius, Pyrocles* and *Timotheus*.

Arnob. **I** Was very glad, Gentlemen, to learn this morning of *Sophronius* some things, whence 'twas easie to conclude, that by the Discourse you had with
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him last night, he has made it allowable for *me* to demand, and rational for *you* to grant, nay to *proffer* me, a Dispensation of the Task you imposed on me at our last meeting. For tho' he spake with the modesty that became him of your Conference, and gave me, but a hasty and imperfect Account of what pass'd between you ; yet I think I may presume, that by his Discourse *Pyrocles* himself was at least inclin'd, and you two, Gentlemen, fully persuaded to admit, that there are *Things above Reason* ; which was the main point about which you expected at our last Congress that I should entertain you, at our then next, or now present meeting.

Eugen. I deny not, that *Sophronius's* Considerations were prevalent on *Timotheus* and me ; and have, I hope, made a good impression on *Pyrocles* himself ; but that ought not to hinder us from coming, as we now do, to claim your promise of entertaining us about *things above Reason*. And if
you

you will needs be dispens'd with from repeating those Considerations that *Sophronius* has employed already, (tho' I doubt not but by repeating them, you would both strengthen and advance them;) we will not be rigid Exactors of our Right: but yet we must not *remit* your Task, tho' we are content to *change* it. For I question not but these Gentlemen will consent with me, to discharge you of your promise of discoursing of the *Arguments* that may infer some things to be above Reason, if you will please to afford us your Thoughts, about the *ways* of avoiding to be imposed on by our selves or others, when such sublime Subjects are treated or discours'd of.

Arnob. Tho' in the recital of your Conference, *Sophronius* did but *touch* on several Subjects whereon it would be proper for me to *insist*, in the Discourse you seem to expect from me; yet I am apt to fear, that he has so prevented me in what I should say, that I

has left little or nothing for *me* to do, but to make Repetitions of what you have heard already much better express'd: which will be an Employment far enough from being grateful, either to you or me.

Eugen. Your Modesty, Sir, is not like to defeat our Curiosity; and that you may not think your self hardly used, or condemned to bare Repetitions; be pleased to take notice, both that, what we desire as a *Favor*, we might claim as a *Compensation*, and that the things we expect from you now, are not Arguments to make out that there are *things above Reason*, but that you would afford us some "*Rules and Directions* how to regulate the *Ratiocinations* we make; and estimate those we meet with, about such Transcendent Subjects.

Arnob. I hope *Eugenius*, you do not in earnest think me so vain as to pretend to frame a Logick about things above Logick; or magisterially

gisterially to deliver Rules about things that are as Anomalous, as they are either Remote or Abstruse. Besides that all you have said, do's not exempt me from a fear, that by reason of *Sophronius's* omitting divers points of his Discourse, and my imperfect Remembrance of those he transiently and summarily mention'd, he has anticipated much of what were otherwise proper for me to say. But yet because 'tis possible that his thoughts and mine, may have lead us, to have made some Reflections that are not at all the same; and that even when others happen to be coincident, it may be not altogether useless, that I should endeavour to *inlarge* some things that he has but *hinted*, and illustrate or vindicate some others that will not be prejudic'd by being cleared, or confirm'd; and above all this, because I would shew you, that I am willing to comply with you somewhat to the hazard of my Discretion, I shall not refuse to offer you

some, not *Rules*, but *Advices*; provided you freely interrupt me, when I begin to trouble you with the Repetition of any thing that you have, tho' I have not heard before; and provided too, that you look not on these *Advices* so much as directions to find the truth in such abstruse matters, as *Cautions* that may chance to assist you to avoid some Errors and Mistakes.

Eugen. We are not so scrupulous but that we shall upon your own terms gladly receive your thoughts, whatever names you please to give them.

Arnob. I shall then without further preamble comply with your Commands, and propose as my

First Advice.

That about Priviledg'd Subjects themselves, we do not admit any (affirmative) assertion without such proofs, to evince it, as are sufficient in their kind.

I hope

I hope Gentlemen that *Sophronius* has so far declar'd to you, what is to be meant by *Priviledg'd things*, that though it be a new term, yet I need not solicitously explain it; and may think it sufficient to intimate in few words that they are things of a very Heteroclyte and Abstruse Nature, and have belonging to them such *peculiar Affections and Attributes*, as require that in judging and reasoning of them we should employ Notions and Rules congruous to their *particular Condition*; some of them superadded to, & others perhaps differing from, those that men generally & safely enough make use of about common & familiar things, that are of a nature less impervious to our Understandings. And if the shortness of this Summary Description, should leave it less clear than I hope you find it; I foresee there will divers occasions of illustrating it, by instances and other ways, occur in the Sequel of our Discourse: In order to which I shall, after this short

and necessary Digression, return to the lately given *First Advice*; and tell you that 'tis grounded upon this Consideration, that 'tis not reasonable to give assent to any thing as a Truth, but upon a sufficient Reason of that Assent. And tho' we may well grant in the general, that a thing which surpasses our Reason *may have* belonging to it some affection that is also above Reason; yet we are not in particular to believe that this or that Affection *doth belong* to it, without particular and competent proof. For since about a Priviledg'd thing, as well as about any other, Propositions may be fram'd, and often are so, that are contrary to one another; to assent to both, were to be sure to believe one falsity, if not two. And if we will assent but to one, we must either judge at Adventures, or allow our selves to examine the *Medinms* of Probation, employed on both sides, and thereupon judge, why one of the Propositions is to be assented to, and the other rejected.

Py.

Pyrocles. I am glad *Arnobius*, that you allow your self and us this manly freedom without which our Understandings were lyable to be impos'd on in matters of the highest Concernment : For there scarce ever did, or I fear ever will, want some men who *either* out of Ignorance and passive Delusion, *or* out of self-Confidence, *or* out of Design, take upon them, with great boldness, to affirm what they please about *priviledg'd Subjects*, and when they are opposed in their Extravagancies by Ratiocinations they cannot answer, they urge, that these things being above Reason, are not to be judged of by it : But of such men as these I usually demand whether their own Assent to the things they would have us believe, be grounded upon some Rational Argument, or not : If they say, 'tis not, they are fools to believe it themselves ; and I should add to the number of fools, if after this acknowledgment, I should believe them : But if they say they do, I desire them
to,

to produce their Argument; for since 'tis fram'd by a Human Understanding, the force of it may be also comprehended & judg'd of by a Human Understanding: And 'tis to no purpose to say, that the Subject surpasses Human Reason; for if it do so indeed, it will surpass theirs as well as mine, and so leave us upon even terms. And let the thing assented to, be what it will, the assent it self ought to be founded upon a sufficient Reason, and consequently upon one that is intelligible, to the Human Intellect that is wrought on by it.

Eugen. I willingly allow, that there is a great difference between the being able and oblig'd to know the nature or cause of a thing, and the being able to give an intelligible account of the motives that induce our assent to it; and without such motives the assent may by chance be given to what is a truth, but that will not hinder it from being an irrational Assent.

Timoth. I was not ill pleas'd *Ar-*
nobius,

nobis, with the Caution you employ'd in the close of your Advice, where, by saying that the positive Proofs you require to evince an Assertion about a priviledg'd thing, must be *sufficient in their Kind*, you plainly intimate that you do not exact rigid Demonstrations of such Assertions: And indeed it were not reasonable you should; for since 'tis manifest, that there are many Truths, such as Historical and Political ones, that by the nature of the things are not capable of Mathematical or Metaphysical Demonstrations, and yet being really Truths, have a just Title to our Assent, it must be acknowledg'd, that a rational Assent may be founded upon Proofs that reach not to rigid Demonstrations, it being sufficient that they are strong enough to deserve a wise mans Acquiescence in them. And therefore if any things can be made out to be reveal'd by God concerning his own Nature, or Actions, or Decrees, we ought firmly to believe them

them , because that , of some of those things , as his Præscience, Mercy, &c. We can have no *better* Proofes; and of others, as what he did before our World was made; and what he will do with us after we are dead, we can have no *other* considerable Proofes at all. And the Objection made by *Pyrocles* against the assenting to audacious Propositions fram'd by imposing Men , will not reach our Case: for there is no reason to think, that because an Object surpasses an humane Understanding, it must therefore surpass the Divine Intellect it self. And even in things that are transacted in the Mind of Man himself; I may learn from another that is not my Superior, what I can by no means attain to know, unless he be pleased to discover it to me. As that he was at such a time, thinking of the Creation of the World, or resolving how to dispose of his Son, and what Recompence he designs to give a Servant that he has not yet entertained.

Pyrocles

Pyrocles. About things of such a kind as you now mention, *Timotheus*, I shall not dissent from you ; because these are things, that tho' not discoverable by our Reason *till* we be informed of them, are yet clearly knowable by our Reason, *when* we are informed of them. But that there should be things, which tho' perspicuously proposed, should not be comprehensible by our understanding, is such an affront to that noble Faculty, that I confess it has much indisposed me to grant (what I am yet unwilling *peremptorily* to deny,) that there are, as *Sophronius* would have us think, not only *some* priviledged things, but *more than one kind* of them ; which if we do admit, it will place such narrow Limits to our Understandings, that we must despair of the desireablest knowledge of all, namely that which is conversant about the noblest and sublimest Objects.

Eugenius. Leaving to *Sophronius* the management of a Point he has studied, and which I have not
now

now time solemnly to Argue; I shall only tell you in general that I see no necessity, That Intelligibility to a *humane Understanding*, should be necessary to the Truth or Existence of a thing; any more than that Visibility to a *Humane Eye*, should be necessary to the Existence of an *Atome*, or of a *Corpuscle* of Air, or of the *Effluvia*'s of a Loadstone, or the Fragrant Exhalations of *Ambergris*, and Musk from a perfumed Glove; I might here observe, that even by the same Sense some Creatures may discern things that may not be perceptible to others: as no attention or application of the Organ (or the Nose) will enable a *man* to perceive the *Effluvia* expiring from the stale Footsteps of a hunted and unseen Hare or Dear, tho' *Hounds*, and especially *Bloodhounds*, will have a vivid Preception of such Odours, and by their help, trace and pursue the flying and unseen Beast. This, I say, may be observed in Favour of my present

sent Argument ; but 'twill perhaps be a more proper illustration to represent, that the natural Incapacity of a Childs Intellect, to understand the abstruse Affections of *Parabola's*, *Hyperbola's* and the incommensurable Lines of a Square, hinders not those Figures, from being contained in *rerum naturâ*, or their Affections from being true and demonstrable. And tho' we do admit some priviledged things in the Sence above declared, yet, (to say somewhat to obviate *Pyrocles's* Fear) there is no necessity that we should be interdicted all Knowledge of those sublime Objects, in which there are many things, whereof, or of their Consequences, we must confess our selves ignorant. Thus elder Geometricians knew very well what a Rectangular Triangle was, when they conceived it to be a Figure consisting of three strait Lines, two of which comprize a right Angle ; though probably for a great while they did not know so much as all its chief

Proper-

Properties or Affections : since for ought appears, before *Pythagoras*, (who offered a *Heccatombe* to the Muses in gratitude for the Discovery) it was not known that the Square of the *Hypothenuſa* is equal to the Squares of both the other Sides ; and much more likely it is, that they were not able to ſolve thoſe Difficulties (that continue to perplex even *our Age*) which attend that endleſs diviſibility of Lines, that is inferrible from that Equality of the two Squares to the ſingle Square.

And beſides the inſcrutable Perfections of God, ſome of his Works are ſuch, that, notwithstanding the compleat Knowledge of them ſurpaſſes our Forces ; yet there remains ſo many things, as well worthy to be known, as poſſible to be attained by us, that they will allow Exerciſe enough to the Wits of all the Philoſophers in the World. And beſides that, as I have been ſaying, even about theſe priviledged Subjects themſelves, divers conſiderable

fiderable things may be discovered,
 if they were altogether impene-
 trable by our Understandings, yet
 their Number is so small, that they
 would leave a large Scope for hu-
 man Knowledge to diffuse and im-
 prove it self. For 'tis not every
 thing that is hard to be understood
 or contrary to the common Rules
 of Probability, that has a right to
 pass for a priviledged thing, for
 so the Paradoxes about Srud
 Quantities, of Isoperimetral Fi-
 gures; duplicate (and triplicate
 Proportion, and divers other sur-
 prising Doctrines that are capable
 of Mathematical Demonstrations,
 would be priviledged things. Nor
 are all those worthy of this Title
 that are by many proposed and
 embraced as Philosophical Myste-
 ries, for, such are the Peripateticks
 Substantial Forms, which really
 are not priviledged things, but
 Scholastic Chimeras. But tho' I
 shall not presume positively to set
 down the discriminating Bounds
 and Signes of priviledged things,

yet most if not all of them being such, as are either primary in their kind, as God himself, and the things whose Nature flows immediately from him, or else things that if thorowly inspected, do necessarily involve the consideration of some kind of *Infinitem*, or else are such that tho' in some main Questions about them one side must be taken, both sides are encombred with absurdities, or scarce superable Difficulties: Those I say being all (or some of them) the usual marks that belong to priviledged things, you will easily grant, that their Number is not near so great as their abstruseness; and that therefore *Pyrocles* and his Philosophical Friends need not fear to want employment for their Curiosity. And for farther Answer to his Objection I shall add that we must regulate our *Belief* by our *Perceptions*, not our *Wishes*, and must not conclude, that because 'twere desirable for us, that all things were penetrable to our humane Understandings, there

there is really nothing that is *not* so: and we can no more conclude that we are as knowing as Angels, because we wish we were so, than that we are as immortal as they, because we would never die. But as for those few things that have belonging to them, Properties so extraordinary, as to make it probable, even at the first sight, that their Nature must be very abstruse and difficult be fully discover'd by us, I hope *Pyrocles* will allow, that things of so Heteroclite a Nature may challenge an exemption from some of the rules imployed about common things; And that really such Rules as I mean, and some also of the vulgar Notions cannot always be safely extended to such Subjects, I forbear to shew in this place; only because I would not too long at once interrupt *Arnobius*; and I expect to have a good opportunity to speak again of this Subject, before our Conference be ended.

Tim. You may then, I presume, *Arnobius*, as soon as you please, favour us with your second Advice.

Arnob. I shall readily obey you, *Timotheus*, by proposing it thus:

The Second Advice, or Rule.

That we be not hasty to frame Negatives about Privileg'd Things, or to reject Propositions or Explications concerning them; at least, as if they were absurd or impossible.

'Tis easie to observe in the Speculation of natural things themselves, how unsafe 'tis not only to affirm, but in divers Cases also reject opinions, before men have any thing near a competent Historical Information of what belongs to the Subject they take upon them peremptorily to judge of. And therefore it must in reason be thought much more unwary
to

to be forward to resolve upon Negative Propositions about things which we our selves acknowledge to be above the reach of Human Reason, which since they are, will become us at least to forbear a rude and insulting way of rejecting the opinions of Learned Men that dissent from us about such things: since the sublimity of the Subject should make mistakes about them the more easie to be pardon'd, because they are difficult to be avoided: and our own sharing in the disability of penetrating such abstruse things, should keep us from being overconfident, that we also may not be mistaken; and incline us to tolerate other mens opinions about matters wherein we our selves have but opinion, not science.

Pyr. But have not you formerly advis'd us not to suffer our selves to be impos'd upon by proofless Assertions, even about privileg'd things?

Arnob. I did so, and do so still;

but there is a great deal of difference between believing a proofless affirmation about things which the affirmer does not know to be true, and framing Negative Conclusions against Opinions, which, for ought we yet clearly know, *may* be true: and therefore my present advice is very consistent with my former: for here I counsel only, either a suspension of Judgment, when there appears no proof on either side sufficient to sway the Intellect; or such a wary and unprejudic'd assent to opinions that are but faintly probable, that the mind may be ready to receive, without either obstinacy, or surprise, any better argument that shall conclude the contrary of the opinion we favour'd before.

Eugen. But methinks 'tis hard to avoid the framing of Conjectures, even about those sublime Subjects, concerning which we can frame but conjectures, and those often very slight ones.

Arnob.

Arnob. I confess an absolute suspension of judgment is a very uneasie thing, nor do I strictly require you should entertain no conjectures; but only that we should consider that we may be easily mistaken in them, and by further information see cause to lay them down, and perhaps exchange them for contrary ones: my thoughts of this matter may be perchance somewhat illustrated by supposing that we four were walking in a High-way, and discover'd as far off as our eyes could reach, some erected and moving body of human stature; tho we should by its shape and walking safely enough conclude that 'twere no other animal than a man, yet what manner of man he were, as old, or young, handsome, or ugly; we should not be able to discern, and consequently, could have no sufficient ground to determine. And as if I should affirm him to be a young man or handsome, you may justly

censure me of rashness; so if because I cannot prove my conjecture, you should resolutely deny that he is a young man or handsome, I should think you guilty, tho not of an equal, yet of a censurable unwariness, because, for ought you know to the contrary, he may be what I guess'd him to be. And tho we are naturally so uneasie under fluctuation of mind, that for my part I confess (and it may be you may be subject to the same Infirmary) I should scarce forbear resembling in my thoughts the man we speak of to some body or other that I knew, yet I should justly think that Conjecture to be very fallible, and *both* expect that when I should come to have a nearer and clearer view of him, I might see cause to dismiss my first *Idea* for that which this new and better prospect would afford me, tho it were quite differing from that I had formerly entertain'd, and should represent him, that my forward

forward thought perhaps resemble, to a young man of my acquaintance with black curl'd hair, and a ruddy complexion, to be pale and wrinckled, with grey hair curl'd like a pound of Candles. The Application, I suppose, I may spare.

But Gentlemen, I would not be understood in the preceding Discourse, as if I were against all framing of Negative Propositions about privileg'd Things; my design being but to dissuade from hasty ones: For sometimes 'tis much more easie and safe to deny things, than to affirm them to belong to a Subject that surpasses our Reason. And the observation may be of use, especially in two cases; *one*, when the Negative we assert is grounded not upon Axioms taken from the usual course of Nature, or upon Propositions dubious, or remote from the first Principles of knowledge, but upon either Catholick and Metaphysical Axioms, or else
upon

upon Truths manifestly flowing from some clear, tho inadequate notion we have of the nature of the things we treat of. The *other* Case is, when we have a clear and sufficient proof by Revelation, or otherwise, of the positive Attributes of the things we contemplate; for then we may safely deny of that Subject any other thing that is really inconsistent with that positive Attribute. Upon which account it is, that tho we do not fully comprehend what God is, yet knowing by the clear Light of Nature (and if we be Christians) believing it upon the account of Revelation, that he is a Being Intelligent and infinitely perfect, we may safely deny against *Epicurus*, *Porstius*, and Mr. *Hobbs*, that he is a Corporeal Substance, as also that he is Mortal, or Corruptible.

Pyrocl. I shall not trouble you, *Arnobius*, to enlarge upon your last Advice, but willingly receive the favour of your next.

Arnob.

Arnob. Which shall be this?

The Third Advice, or Rule.

That a matter of Fact or other Truth about Privileg'd Things being prov'd by Arguments competent in their kind, we ought not to deny it meerly because we cannot explain, or perhaps so much as conceive the Modus of it.

'Tis no very difficult Task to justify this Advice; but I may do it the better, if you give me leave to frame and premise a Distinction, for want of which I have observed a want of Clearness in several Discourses, where the term *Modus* has been employed: for sometimes we would deny so much as a possibillity, that one thing can belong to, or be truly said of another; as when we say we understand not how one Creature can create another; or how there can be a Line that is
neither

neither straight, nor crooked, or a finite (whole) number that is neither even nor odd. But most commonly we mean by our not understanding the *Modus* of a thing, that we do not clearly and distinctly conceive after what manner the Property or other Attribute of a Subject belongs to it, or performs its operations. The first kind of *Modus* may, for distinctions sake, be called a *possible Modus*; and the other, an *actual modus*. Now in both the foregoing Acceptions of the term *Modus*, we may find Instances fit for our present purpose. For we cannot imagine, *How* a short Line or other finite Quantity can be endlessly divisible, or (on the contrary) how Infinite Parts should make but a Finite Total; and yet Geometry constrains us to admit, *That* it is so, But tho there be but few Instances of this kind, yet of the other sort of our Nescience of the *Modus* of things, there may be found
more

more Instances than we could wish there were ; for even in natural and corporeal things the eager disputes of the acuteſt Philoſophers, and the ingenuous Confeſſions of the moſt judicious and moderate, ſufficiently manifeſt, that as yet we know not the manner of operating whereby ſeveral Bodies perform what we well know they bring to paſs. And not to enter into thoſe nice and tedious Diſputes of the cauſe of the Cohesion of the parts of matter in the ſmalleſt, moſt principal, and moſt primary Bodies, perhaps without going out of our ſelves, the way whereby the Rational Soul can exerciſe any power over the humane body, and the way whereby the Underſtanding and the Will act upon one another, have not yet been intelligibly explain'd by any. And the like I may ſay of the *Phænomena* of the *Memory*, eſpecially in thoſe in whom that faculty is eminent. For 'tis a thing
much

much more fit to be admired, than easie to be conceived, how in so narrow a compass as part of a Human Brain, there should be so many thousand distinct Cells or Impressions as are requisite to harbour the Characters or Signatures of many Languages, each of them consisting of many thousand differing Words, besides the Images or Models of so many thousand Faces, Schemes, Buildings, and other sensible Objects, and the Ideas of so many thousand Notions and Thoughts, and the distinct Footsteps of almost innumerable multitudes of other things: and how all these shall in so narrow a compass have such deep and lasting Impressions made for them, and be oftentimes lodged so exactly in the order wherein they were at first committed to the memory (and that perhaps many years before) that upon a sudden command of the Will, or a slight casual Hint, a whole set of Words, Things and Circumstances

Circumstances will in a trice, as it were, start up and present themselves even in the very *Series*, order and manner that so long before belong'd to them. And I doubt not, but that besides those abstruse things, about the *Modus*, of which the more candid Philosophers have confessed their Ignorance, there would many others have been taken notice of, if we did but as seriously and impartially inquire into the Nature of all the things we are pleased to think we know. And when I reflect on the yet depending Disputes between Philosophers and Mathematicians about the nature of *Place* and *Local Motion*, which are things so obvious and familiar to us, I should, tho I had no other Inducements, be inclin'd to think, that we should find difficulties enough in many other Subjects wherein we do not now take notice of any; if we particularly studyed their nature; and that our acquiescence in what we have learned

learned about many things proceeds not from our greater knowledge of their nature, but from our having exercised less curiosity and attention in considering it.

And if in things *Corporeal*, that are the familiar objects of our Senses, we are often reduc'd to confess our Ignorance of the Modes of their inexisting or operating, I hope it will not be denied, that to a Being wholly unapproachable by our Senses, natural Theology may be allowed to ascribe some things whose *Modus* is not attainable by our understanding: As the Divine Prescience of *future Contingents*; which as 'twere impious, to deny as to the truth of the thing; so I fear 'tis impossible to explicate as to the *Modus* of it.

Eugen. If it were at this time proper for me to meddle with things of that kind, I should not much scruple to say in favour of the Christian Religion, that divers Tenents granted both by Christians, Jews, and Heathens,

as parts of *natural* Theology, to me seem as difficult to be conceiv-
ed, as divers of those Mysteries
that for their unintelligible are
fiercely opposed in *Reveal'd* Theo-
logy. I will not take upon me
to judge of others; but for my
part I confess, I do not much
better understand, how an Intel-
lect and a Will and Affections
are distinctly in-existent in God, in
such sort as they are wont to be
attributed to him, than how in
him there can be a Trinity; sta-
ted, not as some Schoolmen ex-
plicate, or rather darken it, but
as the Gospel delivers it: I can as
little explain by any thing in Na-
ture, how God, who is an im-
material Substance, can move
Matter, as how he can create it:
nor would it at all satisfy me to
tell me, that a Rational Soul
moves a Human Body; for I do
not allow, that it gives any motion
to the Body, but only guides that
which other Agents have put the
parts of it into. And tho' it did

produce motion in the Body, my scruple would yet remain; for the *Cartesians* themselves confess, that the power the Soul has of so much as *determining* the motion of the Body belongs to it, not upon any Physical Account, but by the particular Appointment and immediate Power of God, who would have that Power one of the Conditions or Properties of the Union of the Soul and Body. So that to me, who desire to have it explained how an immaterial Substance can move Matter, and consequently, how God can do it, it will be no satisfaction to say, that the Rational Soul can move the Body 'tis joyned to, since that Power is referred merely to God's Appointment: And the question is, how God himself can be conceived to move matter.

Arnob. I know not whether upon the same Grounds which I do not disallow, I may not add, that whereas by many 'tis looked
upon

upon as an inconceivable thing that God should see mens Thoughts, to me it appears as little intelligible how he can know their outward Actions : For since we have no way of discerning the particular motions of Mens Bodies, but by some of our Senses, especially our sight ; and since those Sensations themselves necessarily require Organs duly constituted ; that is, made up of divers parts, fram'd and joyn'd after such a determinate manner, I see not how we can explain the Perception of visible Objects without an Eye, or so much as any Corporeal Organ, or Substance ; especially since 'tis, and that very justly, asserted, that the Deity is not united to any portion of matter, as the Human Soul is to the Human Body. And to these Instances, others to the same purpose might be added, but that I think it fitter to mind you, that of those already mention'd amongst us, there are some that I presume you will

judg referable to that which I lately called a *possible Modus* ; since it seems, *toto genere*, as they speak, inexplicable, how the Attribute inexistis in the Subject, and after what manner the Cause can produce the Effect ascribed to it.

Tim. I know you too well, Gentlemen, to suspect, you mean, by this, to deny to God either the power of moving matter, or that of perceiving all its motions.

Arnob. You may well take that for granted, and you may remember, that to prevent mistakes, I was careful in proposing my Advice to except those things for which there is some positive proof competent in its kind.

Pyrocl. One may then, without surprising you, ask what kind of proofs those may be ?

Arnob. A full Answer to that Question would take up too much of that little time that is allowed us before it grow dark, to go thorough the Advices that yet remain unspoken of. But yet to comply
with

with you as far as my haste will permit, I shall name two or three kinds of positive proofs, that may be employed on such occasions as we speak of. And *first*, if there be an effect that we discern must proceed from such a Cause, or Agent, we may conclude that such a Cause there is, tho we do not particularly conceive how, or by what operation 'tis able to produce the acknowledg'd effect: Thus, tho a man otherwise of a good Judgment, being wholly a stranger to the Mathematicks, cannot conceive how a skillful Astronomer can many years before hand fore-tell Eclipses to a day and hour, and perhaps to a few minutes; yet when the success does, as it often happens, verifie such Predictions, he will be satisfied, that the maker of them had the skill to foreknow the things foretold in them. And so the generality of Learned Men among us, who are not so much acquainted with that part of Navigation,

which some Moderns have by a Greek Name called *Limen-Euretica*, or the Art of steering to Harbours, cannot well conceive how a Ship, that is, for instance, in the vast Atlantick Ocean above a thousand miles from any shoar, should be so directed as to arrive just at a little Harbor not Cannon-shot over, which perhaps neither the Pilot, nor any other in the Ship ever saw. And yet as little as we can distinctly conceive how such an Art of finding Ports can be framed, we scruple not to allow there is such an one, because Navigators to the East and West *Indies*, could not without the Guidance of such an Art find the remotest Ports they are bound for.

A second sort there is of positive proofs consisting of those Consequences that are clearly and legitimately inferr'd from any manifest acknowledg'd, or already demonstrated Truth. To this sort belong divers Mathematical Propositions

Propositions and Corollaries, which tho' being nakedly proposed they seem incredible to the generality of Learned Men, and sometimes to Mathematicians themselves, are yet fully assented to, because they clearly follow from either manifested or demonstrated Truths. Thus many cannot conceive how 'tis possible there may be a million, for instance, of Circles, (or as many more as you please) whose Circumferences shall each of them come nearer and nearer to one another, and to a straight Line assign'd, and yet none of them either touch, much less cut, either any other Circle, or that Line but in one and the same point. And yet this is one of the odd Propositions that Geometers have rightly deduc'd as Corollaries from the sixteenth of *Euclid's* third Element. And tho' we cannot clearly conceive how two Lines, that at their remotest ends are but little distant from each o-

ther, should perpetually incline towards each other without ever concurring ; yet Geometricians, that is, the rigidest Reasoners that we know of, have been compell'd admit this in the *Linea Conchoides* of *Nicomedes*, to name no more. But tho, (not to touch the same strings too often) I thought fit to mention these Instances ; yet whether you judge them sufficient or no, you will allow that which may be taken from the endless divisibility of a Line : For tho, if I misremember not, *Sophronius* told me, he took notice to you how unable we are to have a satisfactory apprehension, how a short line as well as a long, can be divided into more and more parts without any stop, ; yet Geometricians generally admit this, because it may be clearly deduc'd from some Geometrical Truths, and particularly from the incommensurableness of the Side and Diagonal of a Square. And if you will allow me to have once
more

more recourse to Divine Prescience, I may add another acknowledged instance by representing, that Philosophers have admitted that, because they judged it clearly to follow from the infinite Perfections of God; tho, how he can foresee Contingency the most judicious and modest of them did not pretend their Reason was able to conceive.

Timoth. To these two kinds of positive proofs mention'd by *Arnobius*, I doubt not but he will give me leave to add Divine Revelations, if competently attested ones can be produc'd; and therefore I will not by going about to evince this, spend any of the time he reserves for the remaining Rules, to which he may, for me, advance as soon as he thinks fit.

Arnob. I accept the Liberty you offer me, *Timotheus*, to proceed to my next Advice; which is this.

That

The Fourth Advice, or Rule.

That when we treat of Privileg'd Subjects, we are not bound always to think every thing false, that seems to thwart some received Dictate of Reason.

As great a Paradox as this may at first blush appear, yet it will need little more to make it out than the application of some things already delivered on occasion of the two foregoing Advices, of which this is indeed little more than a Corollary. For it being evident, that as a great part of the Dictates of Reason are Negative, so Negative Propositions do usually spring from the repugnancy we judge that some things have to some positive Dictate of Reason; if those positive Dictates contain but gradual and limited Truths (to borrow *Sophronius* his Terms;) and come to be unduly extended to
privileg'd

privileg'd Subjectss it may very possibly happen, that a thing may be really true, that yet must appear false, if it be judg'd of by its congruity to one of those limited, and but respective Dictates of Reason. 'Tis also clear, that not only in Philosophy, but natural (as well as reveal'd) Theology the usual ground on which we reject many things is, that we judge them unintelligible. And I censure not the practice in general, but I think it may easily mislead us, when it is extended to things that we may discern to transcend our Reason, as for ought yet appears, some of the *Modus's* even of things Corporeal are found to do. And we think we have made complete Enumerations of the several ways of inexistence of an Attribute in a Subject, or of the operation of one thing upon another, when indeed we have overlook'd one or other, and perhaps that which we have thus pretermitted may be the true one;

one; tho it may be also that no attention and diligence of ours could in some Cases have served our turn, the *Modus* inquired after being not conceivable to us, tho it may be too a higher than a human Intellect.

Pyrocles. The School-Philosophers for many Ages in the Catalogues they made of the ways of a Bodies working upon another at a distance, did not think of the true ways by which *Odors* and *Sounds* are communicated to us, and therefore had recourse to certain unintelligible things, which they were pleas'd to call *Species Intentionales*. Whereas those modern Naturalists that philosophize freely, acknowledge, that *Odors* are communicated by *Effluvia*, exhaling from the odorous Body, and fitted to affect our Nostrils, and *Sounds* are transmitted to the Ear by the undulating motion which the Air is put into by the impulse of the vibrating, or otherwise agitated parts of the sonorous Body. *Tim.*

Timoth. Methinks we need not go out of our selves to find Instances of both the parts of what *Arnobius* was last saying, if we admit, as I question not but we rationally may, this Tenet of the generality of Philosophers, both ancient and modern, That the Reasonable Soul is an immaterial Substance: For then; whereas men think they have sufficiently enumerated the ways of determining the motion of a Body, by saying, that the determination must be made either in the Line wherein the Impellent that put it into motion made it move, or in the Line wherein it was determined to move by the situation of the resisting Body that it met with in its way; the motions of the animal Spirits, if not also some other internal parts of the Body, may, the Body being duly disposed, be determined by the human Will; which is a way quite differing from the other. And how this Attribute, I mean
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the power of determining the motion of a Body, without any power to impart motion to that Body, should belong to an immaterial Creature, which has no Corporeal Parts to resist the free passage of a Body, and thereby change the Line of its Motion, is not yet, nor perhaps ever will be in this life, clearly conceived by us men, tho there is no doubt, but that he, who indowed the Soul with this Attribute or Power, perfectly understands, both how it exists in the Soul, and how the Soul by exerting it, operates on the Body.

Pyrocles. But can any thing seem more unreasonable than to embrace opinions that contradict the Rules of Reason; which practice, if it be once allowed, why should we trouble our selves to investigate what is congruous or incongruous to Reason, since the making a discovery, that an opinion is repugnant to it, will not assure us of that opinions being false.

Arnob.

Arnob. A person less knowing and equitable than *Pyrocles* would have spared this double Objection, if he had remembred, what hath been formerly said, applicable to our present purpose, and what kind of things they are that we are discoursing of: But to remind him a little of them, I shall desire him to consider with me, that I no way disallow the rejecting of Opinions that are found contrary to those Rules of Reason, at the framing of which the things opin'd about were duly taken into consideration: But in Cases not thought on when such Rules were devised, we are not always bound to submit to be judged by them; and to maintain an opinion unconformable to such a Rule, may be not to oppose a genuine and absolute dictate of Reason, but to rectifie one that is erroneously thought so, by shewing, that the Rule is expressed in more Catholick and Indefinite Terms than it ought to have been.

And

And of two opinions you will not deny that that is the most rational that is most agreeable to those Rules of Reason, that are framed upon the fullest Information.

Eugen. 'Tis not difficult to gather from what you have said, *Arnobius*, that in the Rule you proposed to us ; very few of the Cases that occur in ordinary discourse, or even in that of Philosophers, will be at all concern'd. And in these few Cases wherein you intend the Rule should take place, you are careful to obviate inconveniences by a double caution. The *first* that you suppose, that the opinion that claims an exemption from the common Rules, is not an arbitrary or precarious *Tenet* , but sufficiently made out by proper Arguments. And the *second*, by declaring, that 'tis not to contradict right Reason, but bad Reasoners to give limitation to Rules that have been too hastily fram'd and conceiv'd in too general

neral Terms, by men, who either were not competently inform'd of the variety of Particulars, when they took upon them to make *Analyses* and Enumerations; or else presum'd to infer, that a thing was not, because they did not understand the *Modus* of its existence or operation.

Arnobius. You take my sense right, *Eugenius*, and I have often thought, that the causes of the great clamor that is made against some men for not obsequiously submitting to, what some others call the Rules of Reason, are, that men do not sufficiently understand the *nature* of *things* and *themselves*, but entertain too narrow conceptions of the former, and too high an opinion of the later.

Pyrocles. The Dictates of Reason being the surest, if not the only safe Rules, that Nature has given us to frame our Discourses and Ratiocinations by; I confess I am, tho not fully resolv'd, yet

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very

very unwilling, to allow any Conclusion that is not conformable to them: or to admit that any things should be so highly *privileg'd*, as to be exempted from the Jurisdiction of Reason, whose genuine Declarations they are.

Eugenius. This Objection, *Pyrocles*, seems to me to be grounded rather upon an ambiguity of Terms, than the true nature of Things. For Reason is oftentimes taken for a Set of Notions and Propositions employ'd and acquiesc'd in by this or that sort of Reasoners, that are wont to have names given them from this or that particular Discipline, as Astronomy, Chymistry, Opticks, &c. of whose receiv'd Doctrines they are supposed to be entirely maintainers. But it is also with at least as much propriety, used to signify the rational faculty it self; furnished with the light that accompanies it when it is rightly disposed and informed. In the first of these two Senses it seems
but

but reasonable to allow, that some things ought to have the privilege to be exempted from being judg'd by *some* of the same Rules that are employ'd to judge of other things by; for some of these Rules were fram'd upon a slight consideration of common and familiar things, either by the vulgar, or by men that for want of skill or application of mind did not critically consider the distinct natures of things, and yet presum'd to settle Rules that other mens inadvertence or laziness has made them receive for certain Dictates of Reason: whereas other natures should have been then considered as well as those: and by reason of their not having been so, the Rules I speak of are not always proper and safe, when they are applyed to these overlooked natures. Thus *Successive Beings*, as Time and Local Motion, do in some Cases require to be estimated by other measures than *Substances*, whether materi-

al, or incorporeal. And so also the more nice Metaphysicians, especially among the Moderns, have thought themselves obliged to discourse of *Moduses*, Relations, Privations, Extrinsiccal Denominations, &c. in a very differing way from that which belongs to Bodies and Spirits; tho the unskilful (even among otherwise learned men) have been wont, and still are apt, to confound all these Subjects; by applying to them indiscriminately the same Rules, or, as they think them, Dictates of Reason.

But besides what may be said of these long unregarded or undistinguished natures, there are other entities that are more generally and familiarly taken notice of, wherein I may think one may find instances more applicable to my present purpose. For I observe, that tho all other actual Beings are compounded (to speak in the language of the Schools) of Essence and Existence; yet according

cording to the notion of Meta-
 physicians as well as Divines, it
 must be acknowledg'd, that the
 simplicity of the Divine Nature
 is such as to exclude from God e-
 ven this kind of composition. And
 indeed the notion we have of a
 Being infinitely perfect, imports,
 that, tho in no other Being, yet in
 this, those two are inseparable;
 for actual existence being a per-
 fection, must needs belong to the
 Nature of a Being infinitely per-
 fect. The generality of Philo-
 sophers, after *Aristotle*, conceive
Place to be the immoveable and
 immediately contiguous concave
 Surface of the ambient Body, so
 that 'tis a kind of Vessel that eve-
 ry way contains the Body lodg'd
 in it; but with this difference
 that a Vessel is a kind of move-
 able place, as when a Bottle of
 Wine is carried from the Cellar
 to the Table; but place is an im-
 moveable Vessel, or a Vessel con-
 sidered as immoveable: now sup-
 posing with *Aristotle*, and the
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generality of Philosophers, the plenitude of the world, it may be truly said, that all Plants, Animals, Minerals, Stars and other Bodies are each of them in such an Aristotelian place as has been describ'd; whence it has been usually said by Philosophers, that what is in no place (I hope they meant it only of Bodies) is not at all; yet it appears not how the outermost Heaven, whether that be the Firmament, or no, I need not here inquire, can be properly said to be in a place, since these Philosophers asserting the World to be finite, must grant there is no ambient body without it to contain it. And I shall add on this occasion, that if the outermost Heaven should be impell'd by the irresistible power of God in a straight line this way, or that way, there should ensue a motion without change of place, for the outermost Heaven was in none before, and does not by its progression come to be contain'd by a new

new ambient Body. And in this case even according to those modern Favourers of *Aristotle* that approve *Des' Cartes* his definition of local motion (which indeed is far more intelligible than *Aristotle's*) the world may be said to move without changing of place ; for it does not pass from the Neighbourhood of some Bodies to that of others ; since comprising all Bodies, and yet being bounded, there is no body for it to leave behind, nor any beyond it for it to approach to ; and tho the Cartesians in their Hypothesis of the indefiniteness of the World do partly avoid the force of what I have been saying ; yet besides what may be rationally urg'd to shew, that if the world be not more than indefinite, it must be really finite ; I consider that the Cartesians, tho upon grounds of their own, must allow what I was observing, namely, that tho every particular body in the Universe is naturally capable of Lo-

cal Motion. Yet the Universe it self is not ; and tho every particular body in the world have some determinate Figure ; yet the world it self, being indefinite, has not so.

Whereas *Aristotle* and the Philosophers that have lived since his time, have generally admitted the division establish'd by him, of all Entities, into Substance, and Accident , and accommodated their Rules to one of them, or both : The Learned *Gassendus* and his Followers, have introduc'd a third sort of things, as not being either Substances, or Accidents: and these if you will admit, you will I presume, admit too, that they may be privileg'd from their Rules calculated for other Natures. Of this kind of things, the *Gassendists* make Place or Space to be. For they will not allow it to be a Substance, because it is neither body, nor spirit, but only somewhat that has a capacity to receive or contain bodies, and
would

would subsist, tho God should annihilate all the Substances he has created. And for the same reason it is not to be called an Accident, since that necessarily requires a Substance to reside in (according to that received *Axiom*) *Accidentis esse, est inesse*, whereas in case of the annihilation of the world it self, and consequently all Substances that compose it, their place or space would still remain, and be capable of admitting a new world of the same extent, if God should be pleased to create it; whence *Gassendus* wittily infers, that Bodies are rather accidental in respect of place, than space in respect of Bodies. But without staying to examine this Paradox, I shall venture to say in general, that he who shall with an heedful, and unprejudiced eye, survey the several *Hypotheses*, or Systems, maintain'd by the differing Sects of Philosophers, may find, that tho the Instances will
not

not be all of them the same; yet there is none of these Systems in which one may not observe something or other, to which every one of the Rules that reach to the other Subjects treated of in that Philosophy, cannot safely be apply'd. And indeed the mind of man being naturally far more desirous to know much, than to take the pains requisite to examine, whether he does so or not, is very prone to think that any small number of things that it has not distinctly considered, must be of the same nature and condition with the rest that he judges to be of the same kind. For by thus attaining to the knowledge of things, by way of Inference, the mind gratifies at once both its vanity, and its laziness; looking upon these Conclusions, as marks of the excellency of its rational faculty, whilst they rather proceed from a want of the due exercise of it.

Pyrocles. But if the receiv'd

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Dictates of Reason be not always safe grounds to proceed upon in our Discourse, I would gladly know by what Rules we shall judge of those Rules, and discover them to be erroneous, in case they be so, and by what measures we shall estimate truth and falsehood, in those things wherein the use of those Rules must be laid aside.

Arnobius. Your double objection, *Pyrocles*, I confess to be weighty enough to deserve a considerate answer, and to give you the sum of mine in few words, I shall tell you, that in my opinion, since there is no progress *in infinitum* in the *Criteria* of truth, and that our faculties are the best instruments that God has given us to discover, and to examine it by, I think a clear light or evidence of perception shining in the understanding, affords us the greatest assurance we can have, (I mean in a *natural* way) of the truth of the judgments we pass upon things

things, whether they be other things, or the vulgar rules of reasoning, or subjects that claim a privilege from those rules.

And here give me leave to consider, that it is not by *induction*, but by *evidence*, that we know, that *ex vero nil nisi verum sequitur*. By which it appears, that the *innate light* of the rational faculty is more primary; than the very *Rules of Reasoning*, since by that light we judge even of the lately mention'd Axiom which is it self the grand principle of Ratiocinations made by Inference.

Eugenius. This matter may be perchance somewhat illustrated by observing that, as the understanding is wont to be look'd upon as the eye of the mind; so there is this Analogy between them, that there are some things that the eye may discern (and does judge of) organically, if I may so speak, that is, by the help of instruments: as when it judges of a Line to be streight by the application

applicasion of a Ruler to it, or to be perpendicular by the help of a Plumb-line, or a Circle to be perfect by the help of a pair of Compasses: But there are other things which the eye does perceive (and judge of) immediately and by intuition, and without the help of Organs or Instruments; as when by the bare evidence of the perception it knows that this colour is red, and that other blue, and that Snow is white, not black, and a Char-coal black, not white; and such a Picture is very like, or another unlike to the face it was drawn to represent. For thus there are some things that the Intellect usually judges of, in a kind of Organical way, that is, by the help of certain Rules, or Hypotheses, such as are a great part of the Theorems and Conclusions in Philosophy and Divinity. But there are others which it knows without the help of these Rules more immediately, and as it were intuitively

tuitively by evidence of perception; by which way we know many prime notions and *Effata*, or Axioms Metaphysical, &c. as that *Contradictory Propositions cannot both be true*; that *from truth nothing but truth can legitimately be deduc'd*; that *two things that are each of them equal to a third thing, are equal to one another*; that *a whole number is either even or odd*. And 'tis also upon this evidence of perception; that we receive with an undoubted assent many primitive Ideas and notions, such as those of extended Substance or Body, Divisibility, or Local Motion, a streight Line, a Circle, a right Angle, and many other things that it would be here superfluous to mention.

Arnobius. I think the internal Light that the Author of Nature has set up in mans Intellect qualifies him, if he makes a right use of it, not only to *apply* the Instruments of Knowledge, but also to *frame*, and to *examine* them.

them. For by the help of this Light, the Understanding is enabled to look about, and both to consider apart, and compare together, the natures of all kinds of things; without being necessitated to employ in its Speculations, the Rules or Dictates of any particular Science or Discipline; being sufficiently assisted by its own Light, and those general Axioms and Notions that are of a Catholick Nature, and perpetual truth; and so of a higher order, than the Dictates, or Rules of any particular or subordinate Science or Art. And by these means the Understanding may perceive the imperfection and falsity of such Rules or Theorems, as those men that look no higher, nor no further than their own particular Science or Art, embrace for certain and unquestionable. Thus when Philosophers observ'd that they could frame a clear notion of a thing without considering whether it
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were actually in being or not; or even when they suppose that 'tis not actually in being; as we can frame a clear conception of a *Rose* in Winter, when there are none to be found growing; and have a clear notion of a *Myriagon*, tho' 'tis very like there is no such Figure really existent in the world. They have generally concluded, that the essence of things is differing and separable from their existence. And yet when we consider that God is a Being infinitely perfect, and that actual existence being a perfection, must belong to *Him*; we may by the same light of Reason that dictated Essence & Existence to be two separable things in all other Beings, discern that they must be inseparable in God; and consequently that the forementioned Rule, tho' more general than almost any other, is not absolutely *universal*; but must be limited by the light of Reason. And thus also Philosophers, considering that not only

only all sorts of Bodies, but the immaterial Souls of Men, (and Angels themselves, supposing such Beings) are all endowed with Qualities which are Accidents, have included it in the very notion of a substance, to be the subject of Accidents, or as the Schoolmen speak, *substantia* *accidentibus*; and accordingly *substantia* is wont to be derived à *substando*: But the enfranchised Intellect, finding in it self a notion of an absolutely perfect, and therefore existent Being; and considering that to be the subject of Accidents, is not a thing agreeable to the highest perfection possible; it concludes, that in God there are no Accidents. And this Conclusion has been embraced as a part, not only of Christian, but of Natural Theology; and maintain'd by divers Philosophers themselves, upon Metaphysical and other meerly rational grounds. In short, the native light of the mind may enable

a man, that will make a free and industrious use of it, both to pass a right judgment of the extent of those very Dictates that are commonly taken for Rules of Reason, and to frame others on purpose for privileg'd things, so far forth as they are so. But I fear, Gentlemen, the fourth Advice I have ventured to offer you, has by its tediousness, made you justly impatient of being detain'd by it so long: and therefore I shall advance to the Fifth; which imports,

The Fifth Advice, or Rule.

That where Privileg'd Things are concern'd, we are not always bound to reject every thing, as false, that we know not how to reconcile with some thing that is true.

Pyrocl. You may call this an Advice, but I doubt others will style it a Paradox, and possibly, think

think it one of the greatest that ever was broach'd.

Arnob. Yet perhaps you will find by and by, that it may be in great part made good by what has been already discoursed, and by you admitted. I think it will not be doubted, but that there are, or may be conceived streight Lines, whereof one is a hundred or a thousand times longer than another : 'Tis also generally granted, that a longer Line consists of, or may afford more parts than a shorter ; for a Line equal to the shorter, being taken out of the longer, and consequently just as divisible as it, there will remain of the longer Line another Line, perhaps many times exceeding the shorter Line : And lastly, 'tis generally acknowledged, that no Number can be greater than infinite ; since if the lesser number were capable of accession (as it must be, if it fall short of another number) it would need that accession (or a
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greater) to make it infinite , which yet 'tis supposed to be already.

Pyrocl. I see not yet to what all this may tend.

Arnob. You will quickly perceive it, when I shall have desired you to reconcile these Propositions with the demonstrations of Geometers of the endless Divisibility of all streight Lines ; whence they deduce , that tho they be very unequal among themselves, yet the shortest of them contains, or may afford infinite parts.

Pyrocl. But is there any thing more clear to humane understanding, or more supposed in almost all our Ratiocinations, than that two Truths cannot be contradictory to each other.

Arnob. Tho I am far from affirming, that one Truth can really contradict another truth ; yet I think that which is but a gradual or limited truth, may in some few cases not be reconcilable

able by *us*, to an absolute and universal Truth. For, I think we may (with *Sophronius*) distinguish those Propositions we call true, into Axioms Metaphysical, or Universal, that hold in all Cases without reservation ; and Axioms collected or emergent ; by which I mean such as result from comparing together many particulars that agree in something that is common to them all. And some of these, tho they be so general, that in the usual Subjects of our Ratiocinations they admit of no exceptions ; yet may not be absolutely and unlimitedly true ; of which I know not whether I formerly gave you an instance, even in that Axiom which (almost) all meerly Natural Philosophers have supposed and built on, that, *ex nihilo nihil fit*, which, tho at least one of the highest of gradual or collected Truths, may yet be not universally true, since, for ought we know, God that is acknowledged

to be a Being that is infinitely perfect, may have, and may have exercised, the power of Creating. And in such Cases as this, not to be able to reconcile a truth concerning a privileged thing with a Proposition that generally passes for true (and in other Cases is so indeed) will not presently oblige us to reject either Proposition as false, but sometimes, without destroying either, only to give one of them a due limitation, and restrain it to those sorts of things, on which 'twas at first grounded, and to which 'twas, because of mans ignorance, or inconsiderateness, that 'twas not at first confin'd. And if the Miracles vouch'd either for the Christian, or for any other Religion, be any of them granted to be true; (as almost all mankind agrees in believing in general, that there have been true Miracles ;) it cannot well be deny'd but that Physical Propositions are but limited, and such as I called Collected

lected Truths, being gathered from the settled *Phænomena* of Nature, and are lyable to this limitation or exception, that *They are true, where the irresistible power of God, or some other supernatural Agent is not interpos'd to alter the course of Nature.*

Pyrocl. But do you think, there are no inconsistent Propositions that you would call Truths, wherein you cannot shew that one of them is but a gradual or emergent Truth?

Arnob. 'Tis one thing to inquire whether *men* have yet discerned, or I am able to make out, that one of the Propositions you speak of is but a limited truth; and another, to inquire, whether speaking absolutely and universally, it may to any Intellect appear to be no more than such. For first I consider, that the Reason why we judge things to be repugnant, Being, that the Notions or Ideas we have of them seem to us inconsistent, if either

of these notions be wrong framed, or be judged of by an unfit Rule, we may think those Propositions, to be contradictory that really are not so ; as, if you heedfully mark it, you shall find, that those that are wont to employ their imaginations about things that are the proper Objects of the Intellect, are apt to pronounce things to be unconceivable, only because they find them unimaginable ; as if the Fancy and the Intellect were Faculties of the same extent : Upon which account some have so grossly err'd, as to deny all immaterial Substances, and chose rather so far to degrade the Deity it self, as to impute to it a Corporeal Nature, than to allow any thing to have a Being that is not comprehensible by their Imagination, which themselves acknowledge to be but a Corporeal Faculty. But besides this mistake of things repugnant, which arises from the misapplication or mis-management

ment of our discerning Faculties, I consider in the next place, that there may be another that proceeds from the Imperfection and Limitedness of our Understanding, which being unable to judge of privileged things at the same rate that it does of other Objects, may sometimes be unable to discover that reconcileableness that a more illuminated and penetrating Faculty may discern. This may be illustrated by what usually happens at Sea, (for there mens Prospect is the most free) when looking towards the Main, the Sky and the Waters seem to meet at the edge of the (sensible) Horizon, tho indeed they are as far distant as Heaven is from Earth; and on the other side if you skillfully mix together the dry and fine powder of Orpiment, and that of Indico, you will produce a green colour, as is known to Painters, and the eye takes notice but of an uniform mixture, in which it sees
neither

neither blew nor yellow : But if, (as experience shews) you look on this mixture with a very good Microscope, the emergent colour will disappear ; and you will plainly see instead of it, blew and yellow grains of the powders distinct from one another. Which Instances may serve to shew the imbecillity of our visive Faculty ; and the later of them may teach us, that a thing may appear one and differing, as 'tis looked upon by a more or less discerning sight. But an instance more home to our present purpose may be afforded by yellow Diamonds, which because of their Colour, not only other Men, but the generality of Goldsmiths (in whose error I have sometimes shared) take to be counterfeit Gems, or at best but right Topazes, whereas very skillful Lapidaries, will by sure signs discover and acknowledge them to be true Diamonds, notwithstanding their seeming difference

ference from unquestion'd ones, and account them to be of the same nature with that noblest kind of Jewels. Whence we may learn that a more skillful Judge may discern an agreement in things that almost all other men think they see manifestly to be of distant natures.

Eugenius. Give me leave, Gentlemen, to say on this occasion, that I have several times observed, that men judge some things to be irreconcilable, not only when they are both of them represented to the understanding in the form of Propositions ; but when one of them is but a notion, or a current definition. For divers of these notions do contain in them a Proposition, or are equivalent to it ; As when a Circle is defin'd to be a Figure contain'd in a Line, all whose parts are equally distant from the middlemost Point or Center, this definition contains an affirmation of the essential property of a Circle ;
and

and by the generality of Geometricians is therefore discriminated from that Conick Section which they call an Ellipsis, tho that be also a Figure terminated by one curve Line.

And because you are versed in Mathematicks, I shall on this occasion shew you by a Geometrical Instance, that if a man have not genuine and adequate notions of the things he judges of, he may confidently, and even upon very probable grounds, judge things to be inconsistent, that in reality, are not so. For if an ordinary Cultivator of Mathematical Disciplines should hear one man say, that such a Figure is an Ellipsis, and another affirm it to be a Circle, he would think their assertions to be inconsistent, having his mind prepossessed with an Ellipsis's, being a Conical Section, whose properties must therefore (he supposes) be very differing from those of a Circle ; whereas such wary Geometricians

cians as the Learned Doctor *Wallis* * will tell him, that the vulgar notions of Conick Sections are not adequate to the Figures producible by them : For when a right Cone is cut quite through by an inclining Plane, the figure produced by the Section agrees well with the received notion of an Ellipsis, in which the Diameters are of unequal length; yet if the Plane cut the Cone parallel to the Basis, that Conick Section will be a true Circle, having all its Diameters equal.

* See his
Treatise
de Sectioni-
bus Conicis.

'Tis indeed an uncommon and unheeded account, but such an one upon which I have observed not only Logicians, but Philosophers themselves to err about judging things reconcileable or inconsistent ; that if a man be not sufficiently acquainted with the nature of any of the two things under consideration (and much more if he be ignorant of, or mistaken about both) he may think

think there is a contradiction between things, wherein a Superior or more piercing Intellect may discern a consistency ; for taking it for granted, that he knows one thing to be a truth, if some other thing be affirm'd to be so, which he has not understanding or skill enough to see how to reconcile to it, 'tis no wonder, that how well soever this may be evinced, he should as little know how to admit, as how to reject it. This may be partly illustrated, and partly prov'd by instances drawn from the Mathematicks themselves : For a Novice in Arithmetick, for example, finding That, according to his Rules, there is not one mean proportional number between 4 and 32, will scarce be able to reconcile that Proposition to this other, That there are two mean proportionals between the mentioned numbers ; For he may with great appearance of Reason ask, how, if there be not so much as one mean

mean proportional, there can be two? Whereas those that are acquainted with the nature of Ranks or Series of numbers proceeding in Geometrical Proportion, will easily discern that between those two recited, both the number 8, and the number 16, are mean proportionals.

Timotheus. Tho I disallow not your Instance, *Eugenius*, yet I shall be willing to hear one or two others of a less abstracted Nature.

Eug. To obey you, *Timotheus*, I shall add, that if an old School-Philosopher, or a Mathematician not acquainted with the later Discoveries made by Telescopes, should hear one man say, that the Moon is the most enlightned, when she appears full to us, and another affirm that she is more enlightned at the New Moon than at the Full, he would readily conclude, upon the supposition (which he makes no doubt of) that the Moon receives all her
light

light immediately from the Sun, that the affirmation of the later (Astronomer) cannot be true ; which yet he would not conclude, if he knew (what is discovered by Telescopes) that the Moon is as well inlightned by the Earth, as the Earth by the Moon ; upon which score, whereas at *the Full* she receives but those Beams that come to her directly, from the Sun, at *the Change* she receives both *them* in that part of her Body that is obverted to him, and those *other* Beams of his that are reflected from the Terrestrial Globe to that part of the Moon that is nearest to us.

And to the foregoing Instance, I shall add one more, that seems apposite enough to *Arnobius's* Purpose, and 'tis, that before *Pythagoras*, not only the vulgar of the Greeks, but their Philosophers and Mathematicians too, observing oftentimes that a bright Star preceded the Rising Sun, and that frequently also (on other days)

days) after Sun-set, another Star appear'd, that was none of the fix'd ones ; they confidently concluded from the so distant times of Apparition, that the Sun was attended by two differing Stars, to which accordingly they gave two differing names: But *Pythagoras*, who was a far better Astronomer (as may be guessed, among other things, by his maintaining in those early times the motion of the earth about the Sun) undertook to disabuse them, and effected it. Now if one that had observed *Venus* only in the mornings, should have affirm'd, that besides the six known Planets, there was but a seventh (namely the *Phosphorus*) which preceded the Rising Sun ; and another, (that had taken notice of her only in the Evenings) should assert, that besides the same six known ones, the only seventh was that called *Hesperus*, which sometimes appear'd after his Setting ; a By-stander would pre-

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sently

sently have concluded, that their Assertions were not reconcileable, either to one another, or to the truth ; which (in his judgment) was, that there must be no less than eight visible Planets ; and yet *Pythagoras*, who had more skill, and more piercing wit, did, (as was lately noted) discern and teach, that these two *Phanomena* were produc'd by one and the same Planet *Venus*, determined by its peculiar motion (about the Sun) to shew it self near our Horizon, sometimes before he ascends it, and sometimes after he had left it. Such instances as these, tho' offered but as illustrations, may perswade us from being too forward to reject every proposition, that we see not how to reconcile to what we take for a truth ; provided the distrusted proposition be such as we would acquiesce in, if we could reconcile it to that supposed Truth.

Timotheus. From this Discourse, *Eugenius*, and that of *Arnobius*,

Arnobius, which preceded it, I think one may gather, that according to you two, when two Propositions are laid down, whereof one is made evident to us by Experience, or by Reason, acting within its own Jurisdiction or Compass; and the other is sufficiently proved by being mathematically demonstrated, or duly attested by Divine Revelation, we ought not to reject either of these propositions, as no truth, meerly because we do not yet know how to reconcile them: but we should rather think, that the collected Proposition, is but a gradual, or limited truth; or else we should consider, that we knowing but so imperfectly as we do the particular natures of privileg'd Subjects, for ought we know a superior Intellect may be able to discern a friendly agreement between what is deliver'd about that Subject, and the affirmation that seems repugnant to it, tho we are not quick-sighted

enough to perceive this Agreement. And this, how strange soever you may think it, *Pyrocles*, may not only be countenanc'd by such things as *Eug.* lately said, but both you your self, and almost all mankind do *de facto* seem to practise it, in the case of the Divine Prescience of mans free Actions.

Eugenius. What you contend for, Gentlemen, may perhaps be thought the more receivable, if one should argue thus: First either the Propositions said to be repugnant, are both really true, or they are not; If it be answered, that they are not, the difficulty is at an end: for there is none at all to conceive a true Proposition, should contradict a false one. But, secondly, if both the Propositions be supposed to be true, it must be affirm'd, either that they are reconcilable, or that they are not; if it be said, they are not, then *Pyrocles* his objection is out of doors; for it cannot then be reasonable to say,
that

that the two Propositions, tho inconsistent with one another, must necessarily be one or other of them inconsistent with the truth. But this I presume he will by no means assert, and consequently, must say, that the Propositions are reconcileable. Upon which answer I shall demand, how that can be, unless a superior Intellect, such as unquestionably the Divine is, can discover an agreement between Propositions wherein we cannot discern it. For our not being able to discern it, is you know professedly supposed in the case we discourse of.

Pyrocles. But, *Arnobius*, will not this Doctrine make us very liable to have falsities imposed on us at the pleasure of bold and dictating men?

Arnob. Not, if it be limited to the subjects wherein alone I would have it admitted: for if neither of the things treated of be a privileg'd one, but both in the jurisdiction of ordinary rea-

son, I do not only *consent*, but (in my first Advice) *require*, that the Propositions fram'd about them be estimated according to the common Dictates of Reason. And even in cases where one of the Propositions is about a privileg'd thing, I do not at all think fit, that it should be received in spite of its being repugnant to the gradual truth delivered in the other, unless it can by some other Argument sufficient in its kind be proved to be true; and in that case, that, what I plead for, ought to be admitted, is implied by the suffrage of almost all mankind, in that case, which was just now pertinently mentioned by *Timotheus*: for tho men know not how to reconcile the Liberty of mans will, with the infallible knowledge that God has of those Actions that flow from it, yet they have unanimously judg'd it reasonable to believe both Free-will and Prescience; the former, because they felt it in themselves; and the

the later, partly because the foreknowledge of things being manifestly a perfection, ought not to be denied to God, whom they looked upon as a Being supremely perfect; and partly because some actions and events that they all judg'd to flow from mens free-will, were, as the generality of men believ'd, foretold by Prophetick Oracles. But except in such cases as I have been naming, I am altogether of *Pyrocles's* mind, that since we have scarce any way of discovering a Falsity, but by its being repugnant to somewhat that is true; to deny, that in cases within the jurisdiction of ordinary Reason, the repugnancy of a Proposition to any manifest truth, ought to sway our Judgments, were to deprive us of the usefulest *Criterion* to discriminate between Falshood and Truth.

Timoth. For my part, who believe with many Philosophers, as well Heathen as Christian, that

humane Souls owe their origine to God, and with almost all Philosophers, (for I know what the *Stoicks* held) that as he is the supreme Being, so he is a most free Agent, I see not why, as he has given to Corporeal Beings divers Qualities, very differing in their degrees of Nobleness ; so he might not give to the Intelligent Productions of his Power and Will, various degrees of Intellectual Capacities as well as a limitedness of Nature. And as it will not follow, that because we can see with our eyes very small Objects, and imagine such as are yet much smaller, either the eye, or the imagination can ever reach to so small an Object as an Atome; so it will not follow that because we are able to frame Conceptions of immaterial Beings, we must therefore be able to understand the nature of God, and the Harmony of all his Monadical Attributes. A little Boy may have a clear notion of three, four, five

five, or other smaller numbers, and yet may be unable to frame good conceptions of Triangular and other Polygon Numbers (as some call them) and much more of the abstruse affections of furd Numbers, and the Roots of the higher Algebraical Powers. To discern particular Truths is one thing, and to be able to discover the Intercourse and Harmony between all Truths, is another thing, and a far more difficult one ; as a Traveller may upon the English Shoar know that he sees the Ocean, and upon the Coast of *Affrick* be made to do the like, and at the *East Indies* also he may know that he sees the Ocean ; and yet not know how those so distant Seas communicate with each other, tho that may be manifest enough to a Cosmographer.

Arnob. What you say brings into my mind, that I have sometimes thought God and men enjoy *Truth*, as differingly as they do *Time*. For we men, as we enjoy
time

time but by parcels, and always leave far the greatest part of it unreach'd to by us ; so we know but some particular Truths, and are always ignorant of far more than we attain to. Whereas God, as his eternity reaches to all the portions of time (or measured Durations) so his Omniscience gives him at one view a prospect of the whole extent of Truth: (As if a man could see the whole River of *Nilus* with all its turnings and windings from its hidden Springs to its entrance into the Sea.) Upon which account he sees all particular Truths, not only *distinct*, but *in their Systeme*, and so sees a Connexion between those that to us seem'd the most distant ones.

Arnob. There remains now, Gentlemen, but one part more of your penance to be undergone ; for 'tis high time, I should hasten to the relief of a Patience I have so long distress'd, and therefore I shall give it but one exercise

exercise more, and conclude your Trouble with some reflections on this last Advice.

The Sixth Advice, or Rule.

That in Privileged Things we ought not always to condemn that opinion which is liable to ill Consequences, and incumbred with great inconveniencies, provided the positive proofs of it be sufficient in their kind.

That this Advice may be the more easily admitted, I shall separately suggest three things, which I desire may be afterwards considered all together.

First, that clear positive proofs, proportionate to the nature of things, are genuine and proper motives to induce the understanding to assent to a proposition as true; so that 'tis not always necessary to the evidence and firmness of an Assent, that the Intellect takes notice of the Consequences that may be drawn from it, or the difficulties wherewith
it

it may be incumbered. This is plain in those Assents which of all others, at least that are meerly natural, are by knowing men thought to be the most undoubted and the best grounded; I mean the Assents that are given to the Truth of Geometrical Demonstrations: And yet, *Euclid*, for instance, in all his Elements of Geometry, in some of which surprizing Paradoxes are delivered, (as in the sixteenth proposition of the third Book, and the 117th of the tenth Book, to name no more) contents himself to demonstrate his Assertions in a Mathematical Way, and does not, that I remember, answer or take notice of any one Objection: and the Geometricians of our days think they may safely receive his Propositions upon the Demonstrations annexed to them, without knowing or troubling themselves about the subtleties employed by the Sceptrick *Sextus Empiricus*, or others
of

of that Sect in their writings against the Mathematicians, and all Assertors of assured knowledge.

The second thing I would offer to your consideration, is, that the former part of our Discourse has manifested, that there are some things which our humane and imperfect understandings either cannot, or at least do not, perfectly comprehend: and that nevertheless men have not refrain'd from presuming to dogmatize and frame Notions and Rules about such things, as if they understood them very well. Whence it must needs come to pass, that if they were mistaken (as in things so abstruse, 'tis very like they often were) those that judge by the Rules they laid down, must conceive the Propositions opposite to their mistakes, to be liable to very great, if not insuperable Difficulties and Objections.

And this second Consideration, in conjunction with the first, will make way for the third, as a natural

tural production of them, which is, That, as we need not wonder that privileged things, which are wont to be so sublime as to have been out of the view of those that fram'd the Rules whereby we judge of other things, should be thought liable to great Objections by them who judge of all things only by those Rules ; so we should not require or expect more evidence of a Truth relating to such things, than that there are for it such sufficient positive Reasons, as notwithstanding Objections and Inconveniences, make it, upon the whole matter, worthy to be embraced.

Pyrocles. But can that be worthy to be assented to, which is liable to Objections and Inconveniences, which the maintainers confess they know not how to avoid ? Does not your *Euclid* himself in some of his Demonstrations imploy that way of reasoning which some of his Latine Interpreters call *Deductio ad Absurdum* ?

Arnob.

Arnob. *Euclid* indeed (as well as other Mathematicians) besides that more satisfactory way of direct probation, which perhaps he might have oftner employed than he did, has sometimes where he thought it needful, made use of the *Επαγωγη* you speak of. But in these cases he never goes out of the Discipline he treats of, and confining himself to Arguments drawn from quantity, he urges nothing as absurd, but what is undeniably repugnant to some Truth he had already demonstrated, or to those clear and undisputed Definitions, Axioms, or *Postulata*, which he supposes to have been already granted by those he would convince. But tho he thus argues to prove that his Readers cannot contradict him without contradicting themselves; yet we find not that he was at all solicitous to clear those Difficulties that so quick-sighted a man could not but know some of his Theorems

to

to be attended with : but contents himself to demonstrate the incommensurableness of the Side and Diagonal of a Square, without troubling himself to take notice of the Difficulties that attend the endless Divisibility of a Line, which would follow from what he demonstrated. But, *Pyrocles*, to look back to the first part of your Objection, tho what you say will hold in ordinary Cases, yet such peculiar ones, as we are speaking of, deserve a particular Consideration. About some privileged things there *are*, and about some others there *may be* contradictory Opinions (taking that term in a strict sense) maintain'd. Now as both of these cannot be true, so one of them must be so : as, tho it be hotly disputed whether Quantity be endlessly divisible, yet certainly it either must, or must not be divisible without end : And as was formerly observed which side soever you take, the Inconveniencies will

will be exceeding great, and perhaps there will lie Objections scarce to be *directly* answered. And since one of the two opposite Opinions must be true, it will not always be necessary, that an opinion must be false, which is incumbred with great difficulties, or liable to puzzling Objections. And therefore if the positive proofs on one side be clear and cogent, tho there be perplexing Difficulties objected by the other, the truth ought not for their sake to be rejected; because such difficulties proceeding usually either from notions that men presume to frame about things above their reaches, or from Rules that were not made for such points as are in dispute, the Objections are not to be judged so well founded, as is that acknowledged Principle in Reasoning, that *from Truth, nothing but truth can be legitimately inferr'd.*

Eugen. I confess I have always thought it reasonable in such Cases to compare, as well the *positive proofs* of one opinion with those of the other, as those *Objections* that are urg'd on either side; and there make my estimate upon the

whole matter; tho with a peculiar regard to that opinion that has a great advantage in point of positive Arguments; Because, as *Arnobius* observ'd, those are the proper Inducements to the Assent of the Intellect: And then the Objections may well enough be suspected to proceed from the abstruse nature of Privileg'd things, and the over-great narrowness of the Rules that men are wont to judge of all things by: For we may have a sufficiently clear proof *that* a thing is, whilst we have no satisfactory conception of its *manner* of existing or operating; our illative knowledge, if you will allow me so to speak, being clearer, and extending further than our intuitive or apprehensive knowledge.

Arnob. But even about things that we cannot sufficiently understand, we may in some cases exercise our Reason, in answering Objections that are thought not to be *at all* answerable, because they are not *directly* so. For we may sometimes shew, by framing in another case a like Argument, which the Adversary must confess, does not conclude

clude well , that neither does the Argument that contains his Objection conclude aright.

This I could exemplifie (tho that may seem no easie Task) but that I fear I should want time to propose Examples, whose being very paradoxical would make them need much proof; which you who I fear are quite tired already, would want patience to hear. Wherefore I shall rather recommend to you one Observation, which I take to be of no small moment and use, when we contemplate things of the nature of those we have been discoursing of; and it is this, That we must not expect to be able, as to Privileg'd things, and the Propositions that may be fram'd about them, to resolve all Difficulties, and answer all Objections; since we can never directly answer those, which require for their solution a perfect comprehension of what is Infinite: as a man cannot well answer the Objections that may be made against the *Antipodes*, the Doctrine of Eclipses, that of the different *Phases* of the Moon, and of the long days and nights

nights of some months apiece, near the Poles, (not now to name that more abstruse part of Astronomy, the Theory of the Planets) unless he understand the nature of the Sphere, and some other Principles of Cosmography. So that where Privileg'd things are concern'd, clear and *positive* Arguments ought to be of great weight in favour of the Opinion they conclude for; even when on the contrary side, we may discourse our selves into such Difficulties as may *perplex*, and perchance *pose* our limited Understandings.

Eugen. This is a Point of such abstruse Speculation, that if when we remember our selves to be but men, it shall be thought fit to adventure upon lanching out into it, 'twill be necessary to adjourn the prosecution till we shall have more time before us, than we are masters of now, that the hour is so late, that 'tis high time we should, after our deserved thanks to him, release *Anobis* by wishing him a good night.

50,9

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